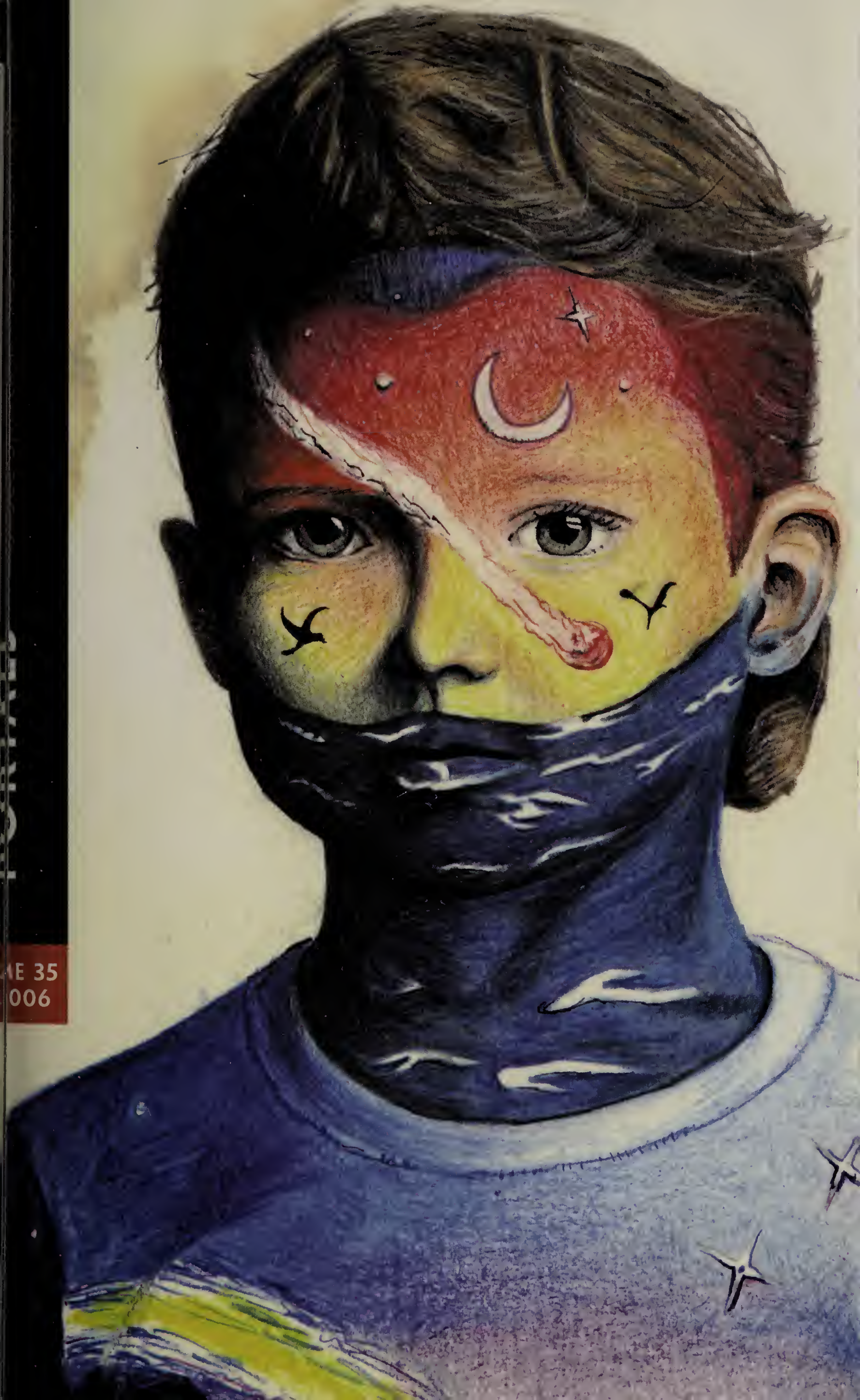

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PNC WRITING AND ART CONTEST 2006-07

The Department of English and Modern Languages is seeking submissions from writers and artists for its thirty-sixth annual writing and art contest. Award winning authors and artists will receive financial aid awards ranging from $10 to $75, and select winning submissions will be published.

ELIGIBILITY

PNC students who enrolled in the Spring, Summer, or Fall 2006 semesters or who will be enrolled in the Spring 2007 semester may submit work for the contest.

SUBMISSION GUIDELINES

For the writing contest, three printed copies must be submitted on white 8 ½" x 11" paper, double-spaced, in Times New Roman 12 point font, and a cover sheet (a single plain piece of covering paper) must accompany each set of three copies, except for category six submissions. For category six, submit an envelope containing the submission in CD-R/CD-RW or Zip disk form, and send an attachment to portalseditor@pnc.edu.

For the art contest, three hardcopies or photocopies (no larger than on 8 ½" x 11") must be submitted for judging. However, the originals of the winning entries must be presented to the Department of English and Modern Languages before the editing deadline, which will be determined after the contest has ended and before they are published—those who do not meet this requirement will be disqualified and will not be awarded a prize.

For all contest submissions, a cover sheet or envelope must label the entry as either *category one, category two, category three, category four, category five, category six, category seven*, or *writing and art* contest and bear the author's name, address, telephone number, email address, and PNC identification number. No anonymous entries will be accepted. Submissions may be given to any English and Modern Languages faculty member or placed in the Writing & Art Contest folder in TECH 157 no later than February 2, 2007.

DETERMINATION OF AWARDS

All submissions are subject to triple-blind review. That is, each work will be sent to three faculty reviewers without the submitter's name being revealed to the reviewers. Each work will then be reviewed by its merit, determined by the category and type of submission. Reviewers' decisions are final.

Authors and artists of winning works will be asked to prepare their works for publication, submit a 50-100 word autobiography, submit their PNC identification numbers, and sign a reproduction rights waiver no later than one week after notification of award; failure to comply with these terms will cause the award to be revoked. Winning authors are also required to read from their works at that annual Writing and Art Contest Banquet, April 19, 2007.

Questions? Contact portalseditor@pnc.edu
Writing Contest Website: http://www.pnc.edu/engl/writingcontest/

PORTALS

THE JOURNAL OF PNC STUDENT WRITING

PURDUE
UNIVERSITY
NORTH CENTRAL

An Equal Access/Equal Opportunity University

VOLUME 35
FALL 2006

PEARSON
Custom
Publishing

Front Cover Art: *Celestial Child* by Fletch
Back Cover Photo: *Autumn's Twilight* by Benjamin Starkey

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Printed in the United States of America

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

ISBN 0-536-29746-0

2006240287

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PEARSON
Custom Publishing

PEARSON CUSTOM PUBLISHING
75 Arlington Street, Suite 300, Boston, MA 02116
A Pearson Education Company

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FOREWORD

This is the thirty-fifth edition of *Portals* and includes some of the best writing of Purdue North Central students. In its initial publication, the authors were congratulated for their outstanding writing ability, which served as a "portal" to "mutual understanding" of the world and a "doorway to the future." Congratulations again go to the exceptional students whose essays, poems, and short stories in *Portals* 2006 can guide all of us—the writers and we readers—toward a promising future.

The publication of *Portals* would not be possible without the generous support of Chancellor Dworkin, the Department of English and Modern Languages, and the indefatigable judges: Barbara Austin, Pat Buckler, Ann Carver, Jesse Cohn, Carol Connelly, Michael Connolly, Janusz Duzinkiewicz, Heather Engstrom, Janine Harrison, Judy Jacobi, K.R. Johnson, Mick Lantis, Deepa Majumdar, Karen Prescott, Jane Rose, Beth Rudnick, Corey Schumacher, Chris Smith, and Kristi Thomas.

Student editor for *Portals* was recent graduate Kriss Tumbleson. Remember, Kriss: "In every cry of every man, / In every Infant's cry of fear, / In every voice, in every ban, / The mind-forg'd manacles I hear." Congratulations on having passed through so many portals.

Congratulations to all of the writers and artists who submitted work for possible inclusion in *Portals*—only a handful of the nearly three hundred submissions could be published, but all of the work was clearly submitted with great thought and care. Thank you.

Bob Mellin
Editor

Kriss Tumbleson
Contributing Editor

PERSONAL ESSAYS

DAD'S CANCER BATTLE

Eugene Maines

My dad was diagnosed with colon cancer a couple of years before I was born in '77. Dad's revelation of cancer greatly affected my early childhood memories, performance in school, and emotional well-being. Although most of the time he was in pain, he never gave up trying to beat it. I still remember his battle with cancer and pray that I never have to put my son or daughter through that ordeal.

The first time I remember Dad being sick was when I was four years old. I was running around the house, playing like any normal kid, when all of a sudden Mom grabbed me and said that we had to hurry up and get Dad to the hospital in Indianapolis seventy miles away. Dad had never gotten this sick before, so that got me to wonder what had happened. They had never told me that Dad was deathly sick and that he would probably not get to see me grow up. On the way to the hospital, Mom informed me that Dad's sickness had been asleep and that it might have awakened.

My first time being in a the hospital was a little scary because of the people rushing around, people with tubes sticking out of them and others I could hear screaming from somewhere down the halls. The doctor hurried to see Dad and told us that he wanted him to stay there a couple of days to watch his condition. So we stayed at the hospital—Mom in Dad's room and me in the waiting rooms, because they wouldn't let me sleep in his room. I think they were scared that I would pull a plug or flip a switch, being a curious kid that I was. I did get to see him all day if I wanted as long as Mom was there. We never left the hospital while Dad was there. We ate our meals there, slept in the waiting room, and for the most part lived there for two

and a half days. When we got home, things changed for me. I didn't want to play with Dad because I was afraid I'd hurt him or that he would get sick. I always thought that way, especially while Mom was at work, and the nearest neighbor was a couple miles away and I wouldn't be able to get to their house in time. Another aspect of that change was I didn't wander too far from the house from that point on. I didn't go to any friend's house or have too many friends over because I didn't want them to see my dad, and I couldn't stand to see their dads being so healthy and vibrant.

A couple of years later, Dad started getting sick from the chemotherapy and radiation, resulting in his hair falling out. He couldn't keep up with me because of his low energy level, and he'd get colds really easy that would put him out of commission for weeks. I was in kindergarten by now, and that became a problem because Dad was not be able to drive the car anymore to pick me up. Mom was at work, so I had to sit at school a couple of extra hours until Mom came to get me. After a month of that, Mom quit her job so she could stay with Dad and get me on time from school. There were quite a few times that she had to come early because I didn't behave at school The fights were primarily my fault; I couldn't deal with the other kids and their perfect families. While I was going to the hospital with my family, they were going to parks, playgrounds, and picnics. I hated them for that reason. I was also a little bit jealous of their family time activities, since I couldn't do most of the things those kids did with their parents.

When I went to first grade, everything went downhill from there on. The cancer he was diagnosed with had spread; hence, Dad was getting worse. The cancer had completely eaten his pelvis and the doctors were scratching their heads wondering how he was still walking around with no pelvis. After awhile he could no longer use his legs and was bedridden about half way through first grade. He had to have a catheter and wear adult diapers just so he wouldn't mess up the house.

The day after I turned seven, while I was in school, Dad had to be rushed to the hospital in an ambulance. I was drawing when the principal's secretary ran in to tell the teacher that I was needed in the office immediately. My teacher, being used to this, knew what was wrong with my dad. The look of urgency that the secretary gave her must have told her it was something different or worse. I went to the principal's office and Mom,

who had been crying, was there. The principal told her to go on and take me for however long it took. We left the school for the hospital; on the way, she told me that Dad was complaining about hurting all over really bad, so she called the ambulance for him. Once we arrived at the hospital, the doctor took my Mom aside and explained to her that Dad had gone into a coma in the ambulance. He informed her that she might want to start calling the rest of the family. He wasn't sure how long Dad would last. A few hours later, most of the family had arrived to say goodbye to Dad. When I got in the room there was hardly any place to stand. I looked at Dad and knew that I wouldn't see him alive again. There were all kinds of machines hooked up to him. Some were beeping while others were silent, as if waiting to sound off. Well, we all took turns hugging and kissing him goodbye. He didn't respond to any of them until Mom and I got to him, and then when Mom reached down to kiss him, he tried to kiss her back and then I kissed him. He kissed me back. He died, at the age of 46, a few minutes after that, right in front of us. He just sighed, stopped breathing, and the silent machines started going off. The nurses rushed in and made us all leave the room so they could see if they could help Dad. We remained in the waiting room to hear the news. A few minutes later, the doctor walked in to confirm the bad news: Dad wasn't coming home with us anymore.

I didn't go back to school for a week after his funeral. All the homework that I had missed was sent to me. When I did go back to school everybody treated me differently than before. I really wasn't into my homework or talking to anybody after all this happened. I grew up disliking everybody and was very angry at the world and at God. But today I have matured and learned that death is just another part of life, no matter how much I tried to ignore it. I still miss my dad and I visit his grave whenever I have a chance. I stop by to put flowers on his stone, tell him that I miss and love him very much, and that he is always in my heart.

SEEDS OF LIFE

Fabiana Araújo

I was born in Sao Paulo, Brazil, in 1974 into the comfortable upper class. I attended a private Catholic school for twelve years. Although it was a very rigid school with traditional dogmas and rules, it was there that I learned most of my values and beliefs. Because my parents were most of the time occupied with their own lives, I spent most of my childhood with the maids, even when we went on vacations. I felt very lonely, but I was not upset with my family. They wanted to give the best to us, and they believed that success in life required hard work and dedication. We were raised to achieve success. My sister was urged to be a doctor as my gramma and my uncles were. My future was determined; I was studying accounting and Brazilian law, since I was supposed to be a lawyer. I had the best teachers, books, and opportunities.

I loved my family more than anything in this world, even though the meaning of the word "love" wasn't very clear in my mind. I never saw any demonstration of love in my family. Objectivity and reason were the rule inside my house. I was not allowed to show my feelings or express my ideas. I was devoted to my family and deeply loved them, but something was missing inside my heart. I did not want to be a lawyer, or anything like my family. I desired to be part of something bigger, better, or more important than to belong to a privileged elite. I wanted to be like the maids. They knew how to love, unlike me. I wanted to see God in every human being as my teachers taught me.

I dropped of out my school when I was sixteen. Because of my family's conservative views, and my strong personality, I left my parental home and

joined the FCEPLAR, with missions on poor cities around my country. Leaving my house was the most difficult thing I have ever done, but it was necessary for me.

Working among the poorest of the poor, I learned how to appreciate simplicity. Gradually, I left my old ties and I adhered exclusively to my new reality. Sometimes I was shocked by the poverty and violence. Most of the houses had no bathroom, stove, TV, or food. Many children lived on the streets and did not have a decent kind of life, but they had a beautiful smile on their faces that I did not have on mine. Of course I missed my style of life. I enjoyed the material comfort that I had in my family's house and everything else that a strong last name gave to me. I remember how hard it was to do the simplest things around the house, like making my bed or cooking my own food. A lot of times I went to the fresh market to buy just two eggs because I did not have money for more. I was poor like my maids, and I refused to think I was not better than anybody because of my economic background or education. I was one of them because we had the same difficulties and fears. I can never adequately express my sense of importance. One new world opened inside me. I did not want to be anybody else. But this experience wasn't enough. I learned how to love, and this love moved me in other directions.

After spending four years working as a volunteer, I returned to Piaui and enrolled in the Faculty of Pedagogy at University of Piaui. Guided by the teachings of Paulo Freire, I became involved with adult education in open schools, and increasingly dedicated myself to public issues. In the winter of 1998, after marrying Araujo, I decided to devote myself to my family.

Everything did not go smoothly. In 2000, I lost my husband and my son in a car accident. It was a tragedy in my life. I could not help my baby and he died in my hands. After the accident, I didn't want to do anything but stay beneath the covers, but my experiences have birthed inside my heart an infinite amount of courage and commitment. Shortly after this time I started working with informal orientation in UNICEF.

One year later, when I was working in a poor community, I had an experience that would change my life forever. I found a newborn abandoned under a bridge. The house was made with cardboard. He was crying inside the old and smelly hammock. Scattered on the floor were empty

bottles of drinks and pieces of dried bread. He was just a little baby and was dying of hunger. I don't know exactly what came into my mind. Was the baby the one that needed all the help or was it I? At this point I was nursing my daughter, and I decided to nurse him as well. I can remember his eyes, his smile, and I still can feel his little hands. Since then, nothing else was missing inside my heart anymore. He went into the poorest places in my heart and filled them with compassion and great faith. Between everything that I did in my life, he was my best accomplishment. From that day forward, I learned what I could find in no book. He gave me back what I had lost one year ago, and I gave to him what he never had.

I didn't become a lawyer as my family wanted, and I don't have the same economic situation of my other sisters. When I left my house, I lost the opportunity to have stability and a very comfortable life, but I found myself. Although my family members and friends still resent me and are never going to be able to understand my decisions, I am convinced that I chose the best road. My journey wasn't wasted; learning cannot be undone. I wanted to learn how to love well and I did. Somebody one day told me that we are free when we do something that is not because of money, pride, or recognition. I was poor but I was free! The smile I saw on the kids' faces every time I did something for them, I kept in my heart. I achieved the success that I was looking for. Now, my inheritance doesn't have any price. My mission always is going to have continuation. I sowed seeds of life.

NOW THAT I AM GONE . . .

Brenda Patterson

I suppose that not many of you would find it surprising that Joe's accident had a huge impact on my life. I don't think many of you realized how much that changed me. When you are confronted in life by huge obstacles, you have to react. The way you react may end up changing your life forever. I feel that is exactly what happened to me.

When I first heard the words, "There is a 4% chance he will have any function below the level of injury," I was terrified. Not for myself, but for Paige and Joe. What would his life be like? How would things be for Paige? She was used to daddy doing so much for her. I didn't at any point in the first few weeks, and maybe even months, contemplate the effect this would have on me. I really didn't have time to think much back then. Once life settled into a routine, I could see the ways his accident had changed me.

One of the changes was learning to be more compassionate. This, however, was not as significant as some of the other changes. If you can think back a few years, maybe even ten years, remember the old me. I was always busy. I always had something on my plate. I would work all day, and I do mean ALL day, then rush home to tuck Zoe in at night. Maybe Jenn would stop over and we'd stay up talking because she needed someone to listen to her problems. After a few hours of sleep, I'd be up and running in the morning again for an extremely full day. Then came Paige. With two kids now, my time became even more valuable to me. Zoe was in school and she had Girl Scouts and soccer afterwards. As they got older, there were more and more things added to the list of activities. And I always wanted to be involved in some way. But back then it was easy. Joe would pick the girls

up from whatever activities that I couldn't be there for. If Paige was sick he could stay home with her, and I didn't always have to call off work. I didn't realize how easy my hectic life was then.

When tragedy struck, that changed. Every day that I lived after that was different. Yes, I still got up and went to work every day. I still did many of the same things that I had done before. I also added a lot more to my list. Joe felt like he couldn't participate as much with Paige. When Paige wanted to play basketball, I saw it as the perfect way for him to get involved. He could coach! Of course, that meant I had to as well. You all know that Zoe prefers soccer, so of course I was obligated to coach both of their soccer teams, too.

One week in my life started to seem like two or three compared to my friends' lives. While they had time to relax at home, I was either taking Joe to the store or doctors, or I was trying to clean the entire house in the spare 15 minutes I had that day. Every minute of each day seemed to be filled with some kind of activity. I was quickly reaching the point of burnout.

Once basketball and soccer had both started, I realized that I wouldn't be able to pick Zoe up from Girl Scouts. I had to break down and ask someone for help. At first I felt so guilty that I wasn't able to take care of everything myself. After a few days, I realized that the other moms really didn't mind dropping the girls off on the way home. A little more time and I decided that Joe could get rides from other people. He always felt bad asking me but knew that I would be there when he needed help. It was someone else's turn.

I could actually stop and breathe! That was a wonderful moment, when I realized I didn't have to do everything. That realization was probably one of the best moments of my life. Not only did I have a little more time for myself, but I also could enjoy the time I was spending with my kids. There was no more reason to rush through every day.

Now that I don't have to worry about whether or not something is getting done, I will spend my time remembering one of my favorite places. You all know how much I enjoyed coaching soccer. And you probably remember how much time I spent at Westside Park. That was my favorite soccer field. In the fall and spring I may have spent as much time there as I did at home! So, when you are thinking of me, take a few minutes to sit on the bleachers at Westside Park. Remember the time I spent there. Even

now, close you eyes and picture it. The bright green grass is gently moving in the breeze. There's still a faint scent left from the last mow. It smells fresh and clean. The sun is up in the sky shining its warmth down on you. In front of you, there is the sound of soccer balls being launched off someone's foot. All around you is the sound of cheers and clapping. As you look up to the sounds, you can see the determination on the faces of the kids playing. Someone makes a great play. All the kids start cheering again. Listen to that sound and smile, knowing that was always my favorite part—the sounds of kids cheering for each other in encouragement.

ACCEPTING LAURA

Rachel Maxin

Buffalo, buffalo, shuffle ball change, flap. I tried vigorously to remember my tap dance routine. Dressed in a costume that could easily be mistaken for a sheath of golden tin foil, I nervously entered from behind the plush, velvet curtains and proceeded to center stage. Before I could take a deep breath, the blinding spotlight hit me. I was an eight-year-old and it was my first dance recital as a soloist. I was Queen Thunder and the rest of my class was The Lightning. From the wings of the stage, a little girl dressed in a similar outfit caught my eye before I began to tap. She flashed a toothy, exaggerated smile and gave me a thumbs up. That was all I needed. I flowed through my dance number like a pro. When I was done with my solo, The Lightning came out, along with the little girl. She was my cousin Laura, and I smiled proudly as I saw her tap beside me.

It wasn't just our love of tap dancing that my cousin and I shared—we also shared several years of childhood friendship. Even though I was much more unsure of myself than she was, I always mothered her. We would be sucking our thumbs together one minute, then playing house the next. I acted like she was my daughter, and I would put her in a cradle and make her "dinner" in my Easy Bake Oven. Together we explored the world of make believe and we had more fun than any other cousins we knew. From tea parties to sleepovers at my grandparents' house, we were the best of friends. We even planned out our weddings together as we played around with an old veil my grandmother kept in our toy chest. Because I was a year older, I would get married first and have a baby. Soon after, Laura would

get married and have her first child. We swore that our babies would be best friends just like us and the rest of our lives would unfold perfectly.

Unfortunately, the land of make believe is much more blissful than reality. Laura always had problems at home. The way her stepfather shouted at her and the way her mother bar-hopped was always an indicator of a dysfunctional family to me. From mental and physical abuse, she had been through it all. Maybe our diverse upbringings ultimately caused Laura and me to drift apart when we became adolescents. While I was consumed in schoolwork and extracurricular activities, Laura slowly began to act rebelliously against her family. She dyed her naturally auburn hair all colors of the rainbow, from purple to green to orange. Soon, it was more than hair dye that was she experimenting with. She befriended the "bad crowd" at her school and she would often leave home with them several days. Without any parental supervision, she developed smoking and alcohol addictions at the tender age of thirteen. Laura ultimately withdrew from my family and me. There was little any of us could do to help her because she moved out in the country with her parents. She finally slipped so far away from us that we would only see her on Christmas and Easter, and at those times it was very apparent that something was wrong with her. Hurt and confused about the friendship that I had lost, I cracked jokes to my family about her. I tried as hard as I could to show that I was not hurt by the situation through putting her down and ignoring her on the holidays that we spent together.

A few months after seeing Laura on Christmas, my mother and I were talking on our way to the mall. Yet, the news my mom was about to tell me on this particular car ride was one of the most shocking things I have ever heard. "Rachel, I have a secret for you, okay?" my mom said softly. Being a sixteen-year-old girl, I loved to hear this. It felt empowering to know that I was one of the few people to know something. "The only reason I am telling you this is so that you make the right decisions down the road . . . please don't tell anyone, not even your dad or brother." *Ooh, extra juicy gossip*, I thought. My mom paused and looked at me square in the eyes, "Laura is pregnant."

I looked away. My thoughts jumped back and forth as though my brain was a pinball machine on hyper speed. Not knowing how I felt, I blurted, "Wow, how typical of her," as I rolled my eyes.

Nine months later, I went shopping with my mother once again. Yet this time, the clothes were not for me—they were for a newborn. I could not believe that we were encouraging such a horrible situation with a shopping spree. Walking through Meijers, carrying a bundle of miniature, pastel clothing, I grunted in disbelief. "I know it's not right, Rachel, but we can't change what happened, okay? It's not the baby's fault that her mother is fifteen," my mother rationalized. I cringed at the thought of seeing my cousin with a newborn. I pictured an orange-haired Laura with one hand around the baby and the other hand flicking a cigarette. Why didn't she give it up for adoption? I never understood why such young girls kept their babies. Why would they screw up their lives if they did not have to? There were so many issues I was uncomfortable with, yet today was the day I was going to see Laura for the first time after she had given birth. Keeping an expressionless face, it was time for me to meet the newest member of my family.

When my mother and I arrived at my grandparents' house, Laura cheerfully opened the door. I sat nonchalantly on a floral blue sofa, making sure to project my disinterest in the whole situation. Behind Laura walked my Aunt April, with the biggest grin ever allowed by the human face. "Isn't she the most darling baby you have ever seen!" she exclaimed in joy. Catching a glimpse of her gorgeous face with smooth, angelic skin, I decided that I could not ignore this baby any longer. Bright red peach fuzz was peaking through the top of her tiny head. Her big, blue eyes curiously gazed around from person to person as though she were examining her surrounding, not fearfully, but with excitement. Laura held the newborn in her lap and lovingly rocked her as though she were made out of precious porcelain. Noticing my stare, Laura offered the baby to my lap. "I don't want to hurt her. What if I hurt her?" I asked frantically.

"Don't worry, I'll teach you," she said soothingly as I reached out for the little bundle. "Dyana, this is your Aunt Rachel." Even though I was technically Dyana's cousin, the combination of the words and the feeling of holding such a warm, beautiful, innocent gift from heaven sent chills down my spine. I finally let my guard down and allowed myself to smile.

"Am I doing this right?" I asked as I rocked her. Laura smiled that toothy, exaggerated smile of hers and gave me the thumbs up. That was all I needed.

I rocked my little cousin gracefully and I smiled so hard that I felt like my face would crack. At that moment, I realized that life would be tough for Laura, but I had a feeling that her strong will and love for her child would help her through the hard times. Unknowingly, Laura taught me one of the greatest lessons of my entire life. I learned that life doesn't always unravel perfectly, and that is nothing to be ashamed of.

SUMMER TEARS

Laura Merkner

I have been affected by many different instances throughout my life, but the moments with my family have affected me the most. We never went on family vacations when I was a child, but I still had a lot of bonding time thrust upon me. As a child of five, I lived in a "normal" family household. I had the two parents who were always hard at work, and the two older siblings who were always hard at work at making my life as difficult as possible. Many vital lessons were given to me during this time of my young life, lessons not always wrapped in nice parcels.

On a mid-summer afternoon, the day was going how it always did. My mother was in the kitchen doing whatever it was she did. My father was in the garage doing whatever tinkering and cutting it was that he did. My brother and sister were both thinking up some new way to torture me, which is what they did.

The oppressive July heat was already making me uncomfortable and sticky, when my brother ran up and started one of his favorite bits.

"I 'one' the sandbox," he shouted enthusiastically.

I had heard this statement many times before, sometimes with the word "garbage" substituted for "sandbox."

"I 'two' the sandbox," I obediently replied.

I was determined this time not to end up with the same fate as usual. Little did I know the game was lost before I had even begun.

"I 'three' the sandbox," he followed.

This, of course, went on until the inevitable number eight, where I wound up having to "eat" the sandbox. The humiliation of this happening

to me again was more than I could bear. With my brother's raucous laughter following me, I ran straight into the house and into the comforting arms of my mother. I spilled out all of the humiliation and frustration that a five-year old could possess. Piece by piece, I laid out my anger onto her kitchen floor, and I let her coddle and console every piece back in order. I did not even consider going to my father with my childish troubles. This job was too unimportant for his expertise. My mother sympathized with me, and that was enough.

On another summer day, while I was happily playing with my siblings in our yard, they decided to impart a new bit of knowledge to me. They told me I was adopted. I was a very sensitive child, so I reacted to this news exactly the way they wanted. I turned heel, and ran for the kitchen, seeking the comforting words my mother was so quick to give.

Apprehensive and wishing desperately for it all to be a bad dream, I told my mother what my siblings said. The look of mortification and sorrow on her face helped to control my sobbing. If she was this upset over hearing the news, then perhaps their cruel words weren't true. I took comfort in that look. She could also be upset, my brain reasoned, that they told me at such a young age. That look was no longer comforting. My mom handed out a few reassuring words and a tissue for my tears. According to my mom, my dad should be informed.

I was still unsure whether the information my brother had so graciously bestowed upon me was true or not, but I thought my father would sort it out. I hoped he would have the same reaction as my mother, and possibly, punish my siblings for causing me so much grief. I stood before my dad, tears welling up as the confusion mounted again. Looking at the dirty garage floor, and barely able to see through the sawdust and tears, I gave him the message.

"They weren't supposed to tell you, yet," he quipped, with a smirk and a chuckle. Startled, I looked up quickly and saw the gleam in his eye. My crying stopped. Hearing those words and seeing his face, my fears were suddenly non-existent. In its place, a tinge of shame began to develop. I was embarrassed to believe such a ridiculous lie. After all, I had seen my birth certificate and knew who my parents were. All of my foolish uncertainties were released with just a few teasing words from my father.

The words that my parents hand out have often been a guiding light during many times of trouble. Whether I am writing an essay I would like to get an opinion on, wondering what color to dye my hair, or unsure if I made the right decision about college, their advice is always there. I have learned, since that summer day, the advice I get depends on who I go to. I know that I can always go to my mom to listen to what I want to hear, or I can go to my dad to think about what I need to hear.

ACADEMIC ESSAYS

CLASS IN A "CLASSLESS" SOCIETY

Anthony Underwood

"The history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles." The famous words of Karl Marx in *The Communist Manifesto* are just as true today as he believed them to be the moment he wrote them. Everyday in America we become aware in one form or another of the widening gap between the rich and the poor. Many Americans see this as a natural progression of a technological capitalistic society. They believe that the people who have the most money are those who have worked the hardest throughout their lives to obtain it. Most Americans are aware of income inequality and the patterns of discrimination against women and racial and ethnic groups. However, knowledge of inequality is often portrayed in stories about the gender gap in salary, the homeless, or the number of people in America living below the poverty line. The factors that the majority of citizens ignore or are unable to see are the social factors that keep those at the bottom where they are with nothing but varying levels of insecurity, need, or despair. Americans are all aware of class inequality, for we see it in all areas of our lives. Whether it is the homeless person we walk by as we go about daily chores in urban areas, the beggars whose cups tinkle with the sound of a few coins, the middle-class family member or friend who faces unemployment due to cutbacks, plant closings, or relocation, or the increased cost of food and housing, we are all aware of class (hooks 1). American society is extremely complex with people of all races, ethnic origins, and religions. The economy is the driving force in the nation and its

prosperities and downfalls play a major role in the way our society is molded. When the economy is the topic of discussion, one must also talk of the politics that govern or fail to govern it. However, the people of this nation are divided on an extremely complicated and shifting political spectrum spanning the scope of classical liberalism, the radical right, conservativism, the religious right, libertarianism, and democratic socialism. In order to study class in America, a factual picture of inequality must be reached, its effects evaluated, and reform considered.

The economy of America is one of the largest factors of the class inequality in the society. There are certain facts and trends that can be measured to obtain a statistical picture of class inequality. Since the mid-seventies there has been a slowdown in median family income growth and an increase in income inequality. There are two dominant themes that emerge from this analysis that relate to income position, or class, and labor market opportunity. When it comes to income growth over time, the prosperity of the family depends on their class, with families with higher incomes faring much better than those at the bottom of the scale. Between 1979 and 2000, for example, the real income of households in the lowest fifth (the bottom 20% of earners) grew 6.4%, while that of households in the top fifth (the top 20% of earners) grew 70%, with the top 1% achieving real income gains of 184% (Mishel, et al. 39). Labor market opportunity is extremely important in raising or lowering the living standards of American families. Economic fortunes have always, of course, been linked to work, but the correlation has become increasingly pronounced over time due to the fact that more families work and more family members spend increased amounts of their time in the labor market (Mishel, et al. 39). In many ways the middle-class families have been hit the hardest by the increasing inequality and constrained incomes largely due to decreasing employment opportunities. Middle-income families saw their average income fall be 2.2% in real terms between 2000 and 2003, and that loss is fully accounted for by fewer employment opportunities, meaning sustained unemployment for some and fewer hours worked for the others (Mishel, et al. 39).

This problem leads to increasing the overall inequality in America because the money and income being lost is being filtered into the hands of the rich. The myth in America is that it is a circular or cyclic system; this,

however, is not true. The idea of upward income mobility is becoming increasingly another part of the American myth. It is important to recognize that economies are dynamic and there is the possibility of mobility. Many agree that the distance between the top and the bottom has grown over time but argue that it is becoming easier to climb from the "basement to the penthouse." Careful examination of facts reveals diminishing mobility over time. In the 1970s, 12.4% of families from the lowest income quintile moved to the fourth or fifth highest with only 3.3% moving to the fifth. In the 1980s and 1990s, that share was only 10.6% and 10.7% respectively. Also in these decades the share of families staying in the top fifth grew consistently from 49.1% to 53.2% (Mishel, et al. 75). This exacerbates the idea of upward mobility and adds to the problem of increasing inequality. The American myth supposes that those from the humblest of origins can climb to well-being. As citizens, we wish that to be true and love to see examples of such an ideal as in the case of Horatio Alger's novels in which his characters rise from rags to riches through virtuous hard work. President George W. Bush gave new life to the myth when he was asked whether he was sending a message when he included two blacks, a Hispanic, and two women in the first senior appointments to his incoming administration. The president replied by saying, "You bet, that people who work hard and make the right decisions in life can achieve anything they want in America" (Shipler 5). Within the myth there lies laying blame, for if someone is only able to obtain a low paying job then it is somehow their fault. There is, however, the other extreme in which society is held entirely responsible for the individual's economic disparity. This anti-myth holds that economic power and racial discrimination creates poverty stricken communities and no options for improvement. The problem is that, in reality, people do not fit into myths or anti-myths. Each person's life is the mixed product of bad choices and bad fortune, or roads not taken and roads cut off by accident of birth or circumstance (Shipler 6).

The fallacy of the American myth leads to the idea of wealth and net worth in society, which in turn leads to the largest problem of inequality today. Over the long term, families try to accumulate wealth in order to finance education, purchase a house, start a small business, and fund their retirement. In the short term, wealth in the form of assets such as savings

and checking accounts, stocks, and bonds can be used to get families out of economic emergencies and pitfalls. It is a challenge for middle and lower income families to accumulate wealth. They do not have enough wealth to pay for short term or long term expenses and therefore accumulate debt. They do not accumulate good debt, such as a mortgage that can sometimes be hard to acquire. They instead rely on credit cards and other forms of bad debt to get them the necessities of life and to bail them out of financially rough times. The wealthiest 1% of all households control just over 33% of national wealth, while the bottom 80% of households hold only 16% (Mishel, et al. 277). The most important of assets in the accumulation of wealth is home ownership, which has continued on an upward trend since 1994, especially among non-white households (Mishel, et al. 278). This may look promising when it comes to the area of racial equality; however, the overall unequal distribution of home ownership persists. Only 50% of those in the bottom quarter of the income distribution own their homes, while 88% in the top quarter of the income distribution own homes (Mishel, et al. 278). This is not surprising due to the fact that those at the bottom do not have the money to invest in a home. This verifies a larger problem in America, the lack in availability of affordable housing, which again points to the effects of class. Most individuals from working class backgrounds do not work directly for the rich and do not know any wealthy people. Even though citizens of the nation like to insist that the United States is a classless society, we all know that the rich live apart from us and quite differently.

Class inequality has many effects on how our society works on a day-to-day basis. The most important and crucial of these effects is that it compromises the very idea of American democracy. For generations Americans have worked to make the voice of citizens equal across lines of race, income, and gender. However, the voices of Americans are both heard and raised unequally. The privileged Americans are organized and have the means to press their demands on the government, so they participate more often in American democracy. Public officials therefore are more responsive to the privileged than to the average or least affluent citizens. Citizens with lower incomes speak with a whisper that is lost on the ears of

inattentive government officials, while the advantaged roar with a clarity and consistency that policy-makers readily hear and routinely follow.

Only some Americans fully exercise their rights as citizens, and they usually come from the more privileged areas of society. Those who enjoy higher incomes, more success in their careers, and the highest levels of education are the people most likely to participate in politics and make their needs and values known to government officials. Voting is the most obvious form of participation in American democracy; however, only one third of citizens turn out at congressional elections and one half at presidential elections ("American Democracy" 6). The citizens who are within these groups that turn out at elections tend to be from group of the most advantaged Americans. A national survey in 1990 showed that nearly nine out of ten individuals in families with incomes over $75,000 reported voting in presidential elections while only half of those in families with incomes under $15,000 reported voting ("American Democracy" 6).

Much smaller proportions of Americans take part in more expensive and time consuming activities such as making contributions to politicians, working with an election campaign, contacting public officials, joining an organization that takes a stand on political issues, or even protests and demonstrations. Only 12% of American households had incomes over $100,000 in 2000, but a whopping 95% of the donors who made substantial contributions were in these wealthiest households ("American Democracy" 7). Giving money to politicians is a form of activity in politics, which in all practical terms is a right that has only been given to a select group of affluent Americans.

Unequal political voice matters because the privileged convey extremely different messages to government officials than do average or especially those who are the least well off. Those Americans who would be more likely to raise issues about socioeconomic equality, the escape from poverty, education, healthcare, and housing are those who are least likely to be politically active. If government officials are to hear about their concerns at all they will hear about them from the privileged advocates who try to speak for the disadvantaged. With the gap between the most affluent and the poor growing by the day, and the political voice of those at the bottom

being hushed, the promise of a successful American democracy is being compromised.

The problems of rising inequality leading to poverty and unequal political voice leading to an unbalanced political forum are not easily or quickly solved; however, if wealth can be diffused more broadly, over time there is hope for a positive change in our society. There is hope of relief in a combination that recognizes both the society's obligation through government and business, and the individual's obligation through labor and family, and the commitment of both the society and individual through education.

When it comes to the issue of economic reform in America, the best way is look at it from outside the box of traditional ideological thought. Policy makers are often blinded by their ideology and cannot see what the average citizen can by raising simple common sense questions about the economy.

Firstly, we must recognize that the United States is a huge economic unit. Many economists argue that nations do not compete, but that only individuals do. Nations do compete. How else can it be explained that an American economics professor makes two or three times as much as British professors but twenty to thirty percent less than their German counterparts (Schafer and Faux 12)? The professors may be equally productive but the Americans play on a more productive "team" than the British and less productive one than the Germans. Therefore, we all are either prosperous or not depending on the national, regional, or local community of which we are a part.

Secondly, we must realize the necessity and importance of a strong public sector. In the past few decades, American politics has been devoted to showing the use of the public sector to generate national income and wealth as far from useful. One must look at history to see the importance of the collective helping to keep America from an economic collapse. After World War I we fell into the Great Depression, yet 75 years later we have still avoided a collapse. This is not an accident. This was managed through a willingness to have government intervene in the marketplace. Compensation for the unemployed, welfare, the progressive income tax, Medicare, and many other automatic stabilizers maintained purchasing power when the marketplace was failing. One can argue over the policies and programs,

but one cannot deny that without them, the nation would not have achieved the economic prosperity over the last half a century. However, the public sector in terms of social programs is being weakened and the notion that America was built and has survived on lassiez-faire has become the assumed truth. Reality must not be denied; in order for there to be progress, there must be a mix of private and public activity to reverse the decline in incomes and living standards.

Lastly, we must stress the importance of the internal development of the nation. The United States is still evolving, and the economy is as well. The markets in America are not saturated, and the idea of looking to Third World countries for economic development is looking in the wrong direction. The United States remains as the largest national market for consumer goods, the most rapidly growing market for sophisticated goods, and the only significant market for face-to-face services (Schafer and Faux 13). Large parts of American society are impoverished and desperately need investment. This is very obvious in our cities where under-investment is taking a horrible human toll, but it is also evident in other areas of the economy. Our public facilities are falling apart, our environment is being destroyed, and the stress in our lives is mounting as leisure time is being exchanged for a longer and longer work week.

America must pursue growth by empowering and revitalizing the people in our nation and promoting the protection of our resources. In order to be a peaceful and prosperous world leader, we must first get the American society in order. The democratic institutions in society cannot survive the 21st century under an economic regime that promotes the prosperity of a smaller and smaller mobile elite while diminishing the living standards and opportunities for the vast majority (Schafer and Faux 14).

A strategy for the reverse of wage decline and inequality involves four major steps: the expanding of the labor market, improving labor skills and the way work is organized, reforming our financial institutions, regulating the global economy (Schafer and Faux 14).

The main focus of a tighter labor market is the importance of reestablishing the obligation of the individual and the society. Society can expect everyone who is willing and able to work will do so, yet cannot do so if its policies make it such that there will always be more people than there are

jobs to fill. The large increase in inequality has largely been a result of policies that focus more on the protection of assets than they do on the creation of jobs. The obsession with the balancing of the federal budget has come in the form of cutting investment in the future that would make the children of today more productive. The part of the deficit which is independent of the business cycle, the structural deficit, is entirely a result of a dysfunctional healthcare system. If the United States kept the growth of our healthcare costs to the level of other advanced industrialized countries, we would see the structural deficit decrease as a percent of national income way into the future (Schafer and Faux 16).

The supply of skilled labor and the way it is put to use is important in the strategy to increase the income of the average American citizen. The focus needs to be shifted from one which focuses on helping workers to adjust to markets forces to one that allows all workers to become more productive and generate higher incomes. Another labor institution that needs to be addressed specifically is the minimum wage. Raising the price of labor at the bottom of the scale will encourage innovation and efficiency improvements (Schafer and Faux 17). More jobs must also be created at the low end of the job market in order for welfare reform to work. If no new jobs are created, then reform will simply move unemployment and poverty from one individual to the next.

The problem of deregulated financial markets undercuts the goal of more productive, higher income industries. There must be large investments in training and most importantly the building of trust between the labor force and management. These goals are being trampled by the demand coming from markets in which capital is extremely free flowing to maximize their short-term profits (Schafer and Faux 18). By making regulation uniform, the distortions that eliminate the capability of promoting growth can be eliminated. There needs to be ways to make more of the capital in America accessible to areas of society that need it the most, such as our inner cities. Another large problem is that the most powerful agency in the economy of America not accountable in the democratic process, the Federal Reserve. Reform in the accessibility of this agency is a huge and necessary step in the reverse of the falling standard of living.

The global economy is becoming increasingly important, and it is a

myth that its importance denies Americans the ability to control their own destiny. However, Americans still buy about 90% of what we produce (Schafer and Faux 18). Americans are told by the media that the Federal Reserve cannot control long-term interest rates because they are set in the global marketplace and that it is necessary to expand the savings rate in order to generate a greater supply of savings for U.S. investment (Schafer and Faux 18). However, we are in a global market, so savings can flow anywhere. Americans are giving up current consumption to provide savings in other countries! Import protection is needed in the short-term to find a balance, and we need industrial policies that maintain balanced trade and rising wages in the long-term.

The key to becoming a truly prosperous nation is when all families have had their economic security restored. Change is never easy, especially in America with our complex and wide ranging political spectrum and limiting democratic institutions. All that people need to do is step out of the blinding box of traditional ideologies and classical liberalism and look at America from a difference perspective. They will be surprised what they see.

Class continues to be an issue that no one wants to face. The closest many Americans come to talking about class is money. Most citizens still hold onto the claim that the United States is a class-free society. However, many never stop to think that without classes there would be not be a top. Everyone knows that some people have more money than others, although class difference and classism are rarely visibly apparent, or they are not noticed when present. Racism and sexism were very clear to see at the time and much easier to challenge. The poor have no political voice in our society. It is no wonder why it has taken so long for people to recognize class, let alone talk about it. Most Americans are afraid to think about our dwindling resources, the high cost of education, housing, and healthcare. They are too afraid to think deeply about class. They would rather hold on to the dream of a class-free society. Even though the rich daily exploit the mass media to teach us that the immigrants are the threat, welfare is the threat, and that they have done everything right to get ahead. They also are starting to wonder about who really profits from poverty, and where the money goes. Whether they want to or not, they all will one day have to face the reality that this is not a classless society.

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CHILDREN OF TELEVISION

Laura Merkner

The topic of children and television has been controversial for years. Many people worry that children will be affected negatively by television messages that involve violence, drugs, and sexuality. But, is all TV bad for children? Viewing experts say television programs could be deemed appropriate for a younger viewing audience if there is educational value in the program, if the program promotes non-violent behavior, and if the parent is monitoring what their child is watching. These three factors could lead to children watching more appropriate programs on television.

Children between the ages of four and sixteen are usually the most influenced by what they watch on television. According to TV Turnoff Network, an organization that promotes "More Reading, Less TV," when children between the ages of four and six were asked if they would rather watch TV or spend time with their fathers, more than fifty percent of the youngsters opted for the TV ("Facts and Figures"). These figures might be appalling, but the survey doesn't say *what* the young children would rather watch on TV. Some television programs for children could actually be considered beneficial for them. Some shows such as *Sesame Street* and *Mr. Roger's Neighborhood* are considered educational since they help children learn fundamental skills such as counting, colors, and friendship. The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) has even identified for television networks what programs are considered educational. According to the FCC, educational, or core programs, must be "at least 30 minutes in length, be aired between the hours of 7:00 a.m. and 10:00 p.m., and be a

regularly scheduled weekly program." Each television station must also "air at least three hours of their core programming per week, must provide parents and consumers with advance information about core programs being aired, and define the type of programs that qualify as core programs" ("Children's"). For example, the popular children's cartoon *Dragon Tales*, is on for thirty minutes at 1:30 pm everyday, so this wholesome show does qualify as a core program for PBS. So, if parents monitor what their children watch and are looking for educational programs, the FCC has laid out some basic guidelines to make this process easier.

Another guideline to make children's viewing habits safer is to not allow them to watch shows that promote violence. In 1966, Rosemary Lee Potter made a rather surprising discovery concerning a violent television show. Potter was working on a National Defense Educational Act for her graduate school program and was observing a first grade class and teacher. The teacher gave the children puppets in order to help them with their verbal behavior. The children used the puppets to act out scenes, but what was surprising was that the children were usually narrating scenes from the popular *Batman* program that was aired weekly on the television set at home. Because of the increased enthusiasm in reading and speaking prompted by this show, the teacher developed reading material related to the caped crusader and his adventures. When the teacher tried out this reading material, Potter observed that "The children paid unusually close attention to detail, listened more closely to other readers, read complex sentences, and attacked unknown and difficult words with great confidence" (1). The reason why this is such a surprising discovery is because the *Batman* series could be considered a rather violent television show. Each week Batman must face an adversary and must physically, and sometimes mentally, beat his opponent in order to triumph as the victor. In each episode, there are often many kicks and punches used while Batman defeats his adversary. The program itself involves violence, but it does seem to promote a non-violent attitude. Batman typically only uses violence when it is necessary. Even though this could be considered a very violent television show, the kids were able to take something positive out of it. The teacher was able to use the fun and adventurous nature of Batman in order

to help her students become excited about learning. Nothing that makes children excited about learning could be considered bad.

Some people, however, would disagree with that statement. Some believe that if a child is watching the television, then nothing good can come of it. The TV Turnoff Network gives us another astonishing figure: in 1961, five percent of American children were obese, but in 2003, this percentage increased by over ten percent ("Facts and Figures"). This tells us that the obesity in children is increasing, and we already know that weight gain is linked to inactivity of the body. If children are watching TV many hours a day, then their body is inactive for just as many hours, and then the child will more than likely be gaining weight. The TV Turnoff Network also informs us that television "slows the metabolism and promotes an unhealthy lifestyle" ("Give TV"). So, if a child is gaining weight because he is watching too much TV, then yes, TV is a problem. However, if the child is watching an excessive amount of TV, then the problem might go deeper than his TV habits. Obesity in America is a growing epidemic but it is the parents' job to police what their kids are doing. If parents believe that their child is taking too much time watching TV and sitting on the couch, then the parent may want to suggest a healthier alternative for entertainment.

It is frightening to think about how teenage violence has progressed throughout the years, but TV should not be considered the only culprit. The programs on television can positively affect the younger generation if the program is educational, if the program is not excessively violent, and if the parents monitor what their kids are watching. Television can be a positive tool, since as Potter points out, "One of the best ways to offset the difficulties TV poses to children is to intervene in their viewing process by making constructive use of the massive TV experience" (Potter iv). If television is used in a positive and constructive manner, then there is no reason why parents should worry about their children sitting down and watching some television.

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PERCEPTION AS DEEP AS A MIRROR

A LOOK AT HUMAN AND NONHUMAN RELATIONSHIPS

Karen Zimmerman

We deal with solutions to simple questions every day of our lives, so who would think such a simple question could bring about such controversy? What is the ethical relationship between humans and nonhuman animals? I recently read "Living like Weasels," by Annie Dillard, "The Face of a Spider: Eyeball to Eyeball with the Good, the Bad, and the Ugly," by David Quammen, and saw a movie produced by PETA, *The Witness*. Each person expresses his own perspective on human and nonhuman relationships, but each appears to be relaying information only for the benefit of his own self-interest.

Dillard and Quammen write about how other living species relate to humans. Dillard's writing relates more about life itself having a deeper meaning as if we could get into an animal's mind, particularly a weasel, living as they do. She vividly describes her special place where she had the experience of becoming one with a weasel through eye contact (569). Dillard thinks humans need to take on the instinctive mentality of animals in order to achieve a better outlook on our own lives (568). Quammen continually poses his bewildering question as to what is ethically right when relating to animals while informing us of his personal experience. He justifies killing

one hundred baby black widow spiders because they were too small to look into their eyes, which is what he believes to be the ethical way to determine if you really want to kill other living species (210). Quammen aspires for an ethical realistic relationship with other living species, while maintaining the necessary balance (209). All of the writings would bring any reader to look at the depth of human and nonhuman relationship.

The movie, *The Witness*, narrated by Eddie Lama, is aimed to gain support in regards to the negative treatment of animals through its eye-opening footage of, animals getting abused and Lama's personal experiences. Lama's perspective changed after he took on the task of babysitting for a kitten, which was out of Lama's element, in his quest to acquire a date with the kitten's owner. When he was exposed to enough animal cruelty that it became personal to him, he made posters and pamphlets. He even made his van into a mobile video system to display his own undercover video and open people's eyes to the animal cruelty, which is happening in the world today. He concluded that forty-one million animals are unnecessarily killed each year. His movie forces people to look at their perspective on animal rights.

Although Dillard, Quammen, and Lama all aspire for, and have their own perspective of, an ethical human and nonhuman relationship, they adapt their opinions to whatever will work to their advantage. Their perspectives defining morals or ethics vary when self-interests change as a result of personal bias, knowledge, fears, or their own experiences. Dillard, Quammen, and Lama are all clear examples of this, being motivated and justifying their actions to what will, in the end, benefit themselves. Dillard justifies invading the weasel's space because she describes it as being her special place (569), and Quammen justifies killing the black widow spiders because they were too small to make eye contact (210). Although Lama has made me think twice about my desire for a shaved beaver fur coat, he initially changed his perception because of a quest for a date. While the writers and Lama want us to look deeper at the human and nonhuman relationships, they all have their own personal interest in mind.

I, too, have a high respect for animals, but I have been guilty of using my perspective to my own advantage. I once worked in a huge office by myself, which became lonely since the company was phasing into nonexis-

tence. One day a friendly mouse appeared and we visited almost every day. One would think I was losing my mind, having conversations with a mouse, and I probably was from the lack of work available. I always told the mouse that he or she was welcome as long as he stayed off my desk. After three months, he quit listening and I found mouse droppings on my desk. It was time for a mousetrap and some peanut butter. The friendly mouse was no more. When it became an inconvenience to me and he was in what I considered my domain, I felt he had to go. As I have previously stated, people are always subject to change their opinion or actions if it will benefit their own wants or needs.

The ethical treatment of animals and personal gain from it is not a new issue. On July 7, 1969, Bonny, a male ringtail monkey, was launched from Cape Kennedy, Florida for a thirty-day flight ("Monkey's Space Trip Cut Short"). By the eighth day into the flight, Bonny became sluggish, refusing water and ignoring signals sent from the ground. On the ninth day, scientists feared for Bonny's health and the mission was aborted (22). The question is, did they truly fear for Bonny's health or was it the time and cost issue for training a new monkey? The chances are great that it was the latter.

Many different groups have their own perspective on ethical human and nonhuman relationships, yet even the opinions of individuals within the same group change in order to justify what will accommodate their own personal gain. The following summary from the *Encyclopedia of Bioethics*, will further illustrate the many different perspectives on human and nonhuman relationships and continual motive being self-gain. Contractarians believe in contracts formed by an agreement between all parties (162). Obviously, animals are not a consideration with them since they are unable to communicate and enter into a contract willingly. Aristotle makes a valid point when he stated that animals are here for humans to benefit from and for humans to feel good about themselves for treating them with a certain amount of respect (160). An animal as a pet is a good example of human self-gain due to it primarily being for our companionship. Even if we go to the humane society to get our pets out of goodness for the animal, it is still a means of making us feel better. Kantians believe if one is kind and respectful to nonhuman animals, they will be the same to other humans (163). Again, this is a way for humans to look out for themselves. There are

constant questions concerning what is considered as crossing the line between necessity and cruelty in dealing with nonhuman animals no matter what group is examined. Even though they do not fully support any one destined view, it is quite clear that selfishness is the root of people's motives.

Carl Cohen and Tom Regan state in their book, *The Animal Rights Debate*, that although the "majority of Americans" have "one mind when it comes to opposing the mistreatment of animals, most people evidently believe we do nothing wrong when we make them suffer or die in pursuit of various human interests." According to the latest polls, ninety-nine percent of Americans eat meat and seventy percent agree with testing of animals for treatment of medical conditions (157). The Bible also causes controversy because it states that humans are to dominate over all living things (Genesis 1:26). Many misinterpret the writing and do not realize the continuation informs that this should be done in a loving, respectful manner. People should read further to find "[a] righteous man cares for the needs of his animal, but the kindest acts of the wicked are cruel" (Proverbs 12:10).

Even though animal rights activists' points of view differ so dramatically, they are striving toward a common goal; sadly, it is primarily because of human's natural instinct to be selfish. Most people have some kind of respect for animals and desire to support them, but the level of respect ultimately lies on one's personal opinion of that species. Humans accommodate and justify their thoughts to make themselves feel right about their own ethics, morality, or virtues. After research on the subject of human and nonhuman relationships, I believe all are striving for the same common good or what they believe is ethically acceptable, but no two people agree or have the same view on this subject. The subject is so controversial because the proper way to treat nonhuman animals is arguable and the definition of the word "moral" tends to be disputed from one individual to another. Also, everyone has their own purpose for self-gain, which differs from person to person and continually changes as circumstances change. There are immeasurable views and people will continually fight for what their perception is of the same greater good, but not everyone is going to be happy unless animals are treated the way each sees fit with their own morals. If people were able to work together to find common grounds for

what they agree on, there would be a power in numbers that would actually make an active, productive fight, which would be more acceptable and lead to better human and nonhuman relationships.

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PRINCIPLE DIVISIONS

Tim Bruce

And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat upon that house; and it fell: and great was the fall of it.
—Matthew 7:27

There is no question that Americans are currently embroiled in a culture war, the outcome of which will likely have a tremendous impact on our future as a great democracy. At the heart of this war of ideals are moral value issues that are the focus of bitter disputes between the Left- and Right-wing ideologues. On one side are conservatives and traditionalists who assert that America was founded upon Judeo-Christian values, and that these values must be preserved and protected for the good of our society. These right-wing groups ardently defend the U.S. Constitution as a literal document and strive to prevent its subjection to the varying interpretations of activist judges—often referred to as "personal preference" justices. On the other side is a new wave of liberals and progressive secularists who seek unfailing political correctness, and who would remove all religious displays—particularly *Christian* displays—and references to God (such as "One nation under God . . .") from the public arena. The secularists are often aided by organizations like the American Civil Liberties Union, which is today known for its ultra-liberal stance on most moral issues. The Left sees our Constitution as a flexible document open to new interpretations. Which side can be determined to have our nation's best interest at heart? Which side would best protect the United States—the world's only remaining superpower—from those who seek our fall?

I cannot recall a time when this country was more divided than it is today. As one political pundit on *The Radio Factor with Bill O'Reilly* put it: "People sit across from one another seething with hatred for each other." It seems that an unintended consequence of the culture war is that the two sides are so politically and ideologically prejudiced that their actions sometimes have a negative impact on the common good. The blame game that ensued immediately after hurricane Katrina ravaged the Gulf Coast is an example. As the citizens of the affected areas were struggling to survive the storm's aftermath, our two main political camps, rather than acknowledge a catastrophic natural event and come together to aid the victims and save lives, instead began attempting to score political points off of one another with finger pointing.

Similar in certain respects to Katrina's aftermath (looting, violence, and chaos) were the infamous Los Angeles riots of 1992. Three short weeks after that ordeal in LA, former Vice President Dan Quayle gave a speech entitled "Restoring Basic Values" to the Commonwealth Club of California. During his term as U.S. Senator, Quayle became known as "a spokesman of The New Right" ("Dan Quayle"), a wing of the conservative movement.

Although Quayle endured fervid contempt from the Left for such speeches on moral values, he stood fast atop the moral values platform of the Bush/Quayle campaign. Quayle has since gained a measure of respect as one who reflected the values of what is now referred to as "Red State America" (states assumed to have a lock on the Republican or conservative vote). Quayle put it this way for his audience:

> I believe the lawless social anarchy which we saw is directly related to the breakdown of family structure, personal responsibility, and social order in too many areas of our society. For the poor the situation is compounded by a welfare ethos that impedes individual efforts to move ahead in society, and hampers their ability to take advantage of the opportunities America offers. (275)

Quayle acknowledged America's history of racism, but noted also the great strides America has made to overcome racial prejudices and discrimination through reforms (mainly initiated in the 1960s). In discussing the

underclass, Quayle described a "culture of poverty" (275) as much more violent than in past generations. Linking broken homes and crime, Quayle said that families who had mothers and fathers living in the household were "far less likely to be drawn into lives of crime" (276).

In1994, more than two years after Quayle gave his speech in California, Ellen Willis wrote an article for *Glamour* called "Why I'm Not 'Pro-Family'." With the Democrats not known for the promotion of any morals platform, Willis found it ironic that even with that party in control of the White House and the Congress, family values were once again at the center of debate. Willis related a nerve was struck with an article in *The Atlantic* "provocatively titled: 'Dan Quayle Was Right' " (283). Willis believes the views on morality and responsibility held by many politicians—particularly the Republican views—are out of touch with modern-day Americans.

Willis came from a traditional family and says, "I had security; I had love" (238). She went on to say that she "saw family life as less than ideal and had no desire to replicate it" (238). Furthermore, Willis wrote, "family life promoted self-abnegation and social conformity while stifling eroticism and spontaneity" (238). In her view, marriage holds us back from pursuing personal happiness. She sees self-fulfillment as the order of the day and advocates adding more "parents" to be responsible for raising our children—as in a communal setting—as opposed to the single or two-parent household. Touting the benefits of "Cooperative child rearing" (287), Willis sees the opportunity for parents to find the freedom to pursue personal happiness.

It seems that one cannot have a discussion on family values without entering into a debate on welfare issues. Welfare has long been an indicator of social problems like broken families and crime. Although their accounts of and solutions to welfare issues are completely different, Quayle and Willis each see the correlation between family structure and welfare dependence. Quayle believes that marriage is, in part, an answer to poverty. He states that "Renewing these values will give people the strength to help themselves by acquiring the tools to achieve **self-sufficiency** (emphasis mine)" (279). Quayle clearly believes traditional families are the way from the underclass to the middle class. Willis, on the other hand, believes it possible

that the government can spend its way out of its problems with social ills. She sees welfare handouts as the right of all, including those who have made poor choices, and the way out of those blighted neighborhoods.

There seems to be a growing trend in this culture war, especially among the media elites, to be somewhat misleading in the way they do their reporting. The political correctness movement itself, according to conservative Rush Limbaugh, "is one that is designed to impede the truth" (*The Rush Limbaugh Program*). The days of impartial reporting seem to be over—at least for the time being—on both sides of this culture war. One socialist publication, according to Limbaugh, referred to the "ethnic cleansing" of New Orleans via Katrina. Certainly most Americans see that type of "reporting" as blatantly biased and extreme, but these publications do have a surprisingly large readership.

The distinctions we make between the Left and Right in America seem perilously close to the type we have made between race and ethnicity. By using such distinctions, we only succeed in creating wedges to divide us into opposing groups (perhaps to say warring factions, in this case, would not be a stretch). We could instead be uniting as Americans merely exercising a free exchange of ideas. I believe that both Quayle and Willis both have the best interest of America at heart, and that both do love their country. That is not to say that each is correct—only that they both have contentious intentions. Willis has a right to pursue her happiness as long as she does no one harm in the process, and Quayle can express himself with free speech. We as Americans must decide which is the correct lifestyle for us on an individual basis, being careful not to allow ourselves to be consumed by all-encompassing philosophies of certain sects.

I do not speak as one who was born into privilege and thinks he knows how everyone else should live their lives. Yet I know what life I prefer to live and I know how to get there. It seems to me that so many of these arguments between the Left and the Right could be decided with common sense. My own common sense has me (generally) gravitating toward those ideas expressed by Quayle and his ilk. The conservatives do not receive my unceasing loyalty in everything they represent, but for me their ideas are more sensible overall. No one, for example, could reasonably expect to make me believe that a child is not better off with a mother and a father in

the home, that we are done any harm by a passing reference to God, or that I am not personally responsible for my own decisions.

I resolutely believe that if America is to remain a great democracy and a world power, its citizens must find a way to end the division and hatred. We must become less concerned with political correctness and get back to the ideals our nation was founded upon. Otherwise we can be assured of the destruction of the world's greatest democracy.

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ABRAHAM LINCOLN

EMANCIPATOR OR PROCLAIMER? DEBATING HIS HISTORY.

Bradley Dimmit

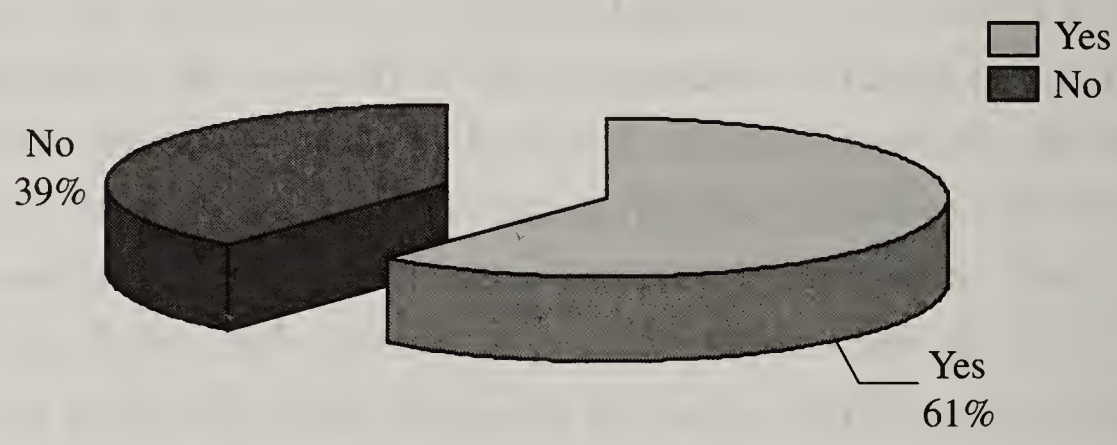
Over one hundred and forty years ago, in 1858, Abraham Lincoln and Stephen Douglas engaged in a series of debates for the United States Senate. The issues the candidates discussed most often concerned the extension of slavery in the national territories, the status of the Negro, and the power of the states to regulate slavery as they saw fit. Although Douglass won the election, Lincoln acquired a nation-wide reputation that would carry him to the presidency. In the eyes of many Americans, Lincoln will be forever remembered as the "Great Emancipator" because of the emphasis given to the important issue of slavery. As a result of Lincoln's legacy fading into history, society is probably better informed and, at the same time, confused about the significant events of his formative years. Although Lincoln is remembered as a champion of racial equality, there is substantial evidence suggesting that he was not committed to social and political equality as history leads us to believe.

Supporters of Lincoln argue that he will forever be remembered as both a champion of equality and as an advocate of the Declaration of Independence's statement that "all men are created equal." In fact, political scientist Harry V. Jaffa has even argued that Lincoln "literally redefined the purpose of government as the pursuit of equality rather than of individual

rights" (83). And Norton Garfinkle points to the fact that Lincoln belonged to the newly established "Republican Party," which represented those who considered slavery 'wrong'" (43).

While these statements may be, in fact, accurate, they are also problematic because when assessing Lincoln's legacy, one must remember that, as Economists Murray Rothbard stated, "[he] was a master politician, which means he was a consummate conniver, manipulator, and liar" (131). Lincoln, as with most successful politicians, was not above arguing for one side of an issue and then reversing his position later on. When I read various speeches given by Lincoln early in his political career and then compared them to speeches given during his presidency, it is clear that he took both sides of many issues. In a public opinion poll conducted on the campus of Purdue North Central, nearly 40 percent out of 50 individuals polled believed Lincoln was not in favor of equality among the races. The results of the poll are surprising considering Lincoln's legacy.

I Believe Lincoln was in favor of equality among the races



"Perhaps the clearest example of opposition to racial equality," according to Economist Thomas J. DiLorenzo, "was his response to Senator Douglass in a 1858 debate in Ottawa, Illinois" (11). During that debate, Lincoln stated he had no intention of introducing principles of equality among the black and white races, adding "[T]here is a physical difference between the two [that will] forever forbid their living together upon the footing of perfect equality [. . .] I am in favor of the race for which I belong having the

superior position. I have never said anything to the contrary" (Angle 117). A month later in Charleston, Illinois, Lincoln stated he was not nor ever had been "in favor of [. . .] qualifying them [Negroes] to hold office, nor intermarry with white people" (Angle 235). Lincoln believed, according to Political Science Professor B.A. Burgwald, that given the temperament of the times whites could not live beside blacks or send their children to schools attended by blacks. This meant, Burgwald added, that Lincoln was more in favor of civil equality than social equality. Southerners did not agree. They saw Lincoln as a direct threat to slavery. With Lincoln winning the election, they argued, he would have the chance to restructure the Supreme Court, which he did, leading to regulations on slavery and eventually to an amendment outlawing such a practice.

History has also shown that Lincoln was supportive of the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850, which allowed the federal government to use its resources to return runaway slaves to their owners. At the time, Northern opinion was against the spread of blacks living among them. In fact, many states in the North created amendments within their respective constitutions that forbade blacks from settling within that state's boundaries. Workers in the North feared that free slaves would result in their own loss of jobs and economic opportunities. However, many historians, such as Professor of History Michael Connelly, believe that Lincoln had to support such measures as the Fugitive Slave Act because presidents cannot turn a "blind eye" and allow federal and state laws to be ignored. "To do so," Connelly adds, "would have violated his duties." Moreover, Lincoln had no intention of doing anything about slavery as it existed in the South. In 1860, during his first Inaugural Address, he stated, "I have no purpose, directly or indirectly, to interfere with the institution of slavery in the states where it exists" (Basler 580). Abraham Lincoln explained his view on this subject in Peoria, Illinois, when he stated, "We want them [jobs] for the home of free white people. This cannot be, to any considerable extent, if [slaves] shall be planted within them" (DiLorenzo 21-22). The idea of "whites-only" territories was also the position of the Republican Party to which Lincoln belonged. Lincoln agreed that the only "solution" to the race problem was colonization.

The idea of colonization was first introduced in 1822 when the country of Liberia was founded off the African coast by freed slaves who returned to Africa with the help of American colonization societies. In fact, the capital of Liberia is named Monrovia, named after the U.S. President James Monroe (Muller 313). This idea was reintroduced by Henry Clay in 1827. Before the Civil War, when Lincoln, who was a Clay supporter, was asked what should be done with the slaves once they were freed, he replied, "Send them [. . .] to their native land" (DiLorenzo 16-17). When Congress ended slavery in the District of Columbia in 1862 during Lincoln's first term in office, it appropriated $600,000 for the purpose of sending freed slaves back to Africa. Lincoln gave colonization such a high priority that he instructed his Secretary of Interior Caleb Smith to supervise efforts to create a colony called "Linconia," writing that "Eliminating every last black person from American soil [would be] a glorious consummation" (DiLorenzo 18). In fact, historian P.J. Staudenraus wrote, "The American Colonization Society's leaders watched in amazement as Lincoln's administration [. . .] toyed with first one plan and then another" (246). Lincoln's effort at colonization led the great abolitionist William Lloyd Garrison to denounce Lincoln for wanting to "rid [the country] of those who are as good as himself" (DiLorenzo 19).

Another problem concerning Lincoln's legacy was the legality of the "Emancipation Proclamation." On September 22, 1862, after the Union victory at the Battle of Antietam, President Lincoln announced his intentions to use his war powers to issue an executive order freeing all slaves in the Confederacy, which he formally signed in January, 1863. History has shown, however, that the "Emancipation Proclamation" only applied to rebel territory, even though Union armies occupied large parts of the South, including much of Tennessee and Virginia, where it would have been possible to free thousands of slaves. Also exempt from the Proclamation were the slave states of Maryland and a large section of Louisiana, making the immediate effect of the Proclamation limited. This caused critics in the North to hail the document as a political gimmick. Lincoln himself even maintained that the Proclamation was a mere war measure, not an attempt at total emancipation.

Prior to this, General John Fremont, in the summer of 1861, issued a proclamation of his own, declaring that any persons resisting the occupation of the Federal Army (the Confederacy was waging a guerilla war against the Union army in Missouri) would have their property confiscated and their slaves set free. Lincoln, after hearing this, nullified the emancipation part of the proclamation and relieved General Fremont of his duties. Total emancipation, to Lincoln, was not an option, stating, "Free them and make them social and political equals? My own feelings will not admit of this [. . .] We cannot, then, make them equal" (Basler). This view is shared by Political Science Professor B.A. Burgwald who, although he would like to think of Lincoln as sincerely anti-slavery, stated that the "Emancipation Proclamation" was more of a public relations move than anything else because it had no force under the Constitution. Bugwald added that Lincoln's approach to emancipation was more cautious than his colleagues in Congress. "In fact, this caused the Radical Republicans to put a fight during the election of 1864." After the election, Congressman Julian of Indiana introduced a proposal to have Lincoln impeached.

The second problem concerns the constitutionality of the "Emancipation Proclamation." On March 6, 1857, the Supreme Court ruled, in *Dred Scott v. Sandford*, that slaves had no claim to citizenship and were, in fact, considered property, protected by the Fifth Amendment, and that Congress had no authority to pass a law depriving persons of their slaves (Siegel 205-223). Dred Scott, in effect, made Southern slavery secure while, as professor Burgwald added, making Congress kneel to popular sovereignty and allow the states to decide the issue themselves. As a result, the "Emancipation Proclamation" was unconstitutional, and it would have been, depending on the members of the Supreme Court, struck down. It is likely, however, that Lincoln just hoped, as Professor Connelly stated, the Proclamation would incite slave insurrection or at least the threat of one.

The "Emancipation Proclamation" was not the only unconstitutional mechanism of the Lincoln presidency. According to Thomas DiLorenzo, Lincoln imposed military rule on those parts of the South that were conquered territory (150). In fact, for twelve years after the war, the Southern states were run by military dictatorships. He also suspended *habeas corpus*,

determining whether a conviction is consistent with due process of law, ignoring the Supreme Court. Moreover, during the war, when parts of the South were under military occupation, Southerners were given no voting rights and were severely taxed, imposing, as DiLorenzo adds, a regime of taxation without representation (152). Adding fuel to the fire, civil liberties in the South were set aside, resulting in the execution of Southern men who refused to take a loyalty oath to the Lincoln government (DiLorenzo 152). Lincoln, as some historians have suggested, became a dictator.

The past, of course, can never be changed. But our understanding of the past changes constantly. And, as a result, so does our writing of history. There are and will continue to be myths surrounding the legacy of Abraham Lincoln. Many white southerners and black Americans of our time suggest that Lincoln was a champion of segregation, who opposed civil and political rights for black people, while wanting them thrown out of the country. Some have suggested that he destroyed the Constitution to such an extent he was a dictator. The fact of the matter is that Lincoln was a product of the era in which he lived. In the end, Lincoln was a man who had his flaws as well as his strengths, while suffering from his mistakes just as surely as he enjoyed his achievements.

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CREATIVE WRITING

MARY

Kriss Tumbleson

Her pale freckles drooped above lunch,
a smile she's cooked me: a soft chili, deep
inside a bleached antique-rummaged
bowl.

•

I haven't seen her assembled marker or
forgiven myself for being in prison then;
I can't remember when I last saw her.

•

I'm not ready to forget Sundays and cards,
her cream-pale eyes—how fast they died—
or how my leaving left a distant treble in
her voice.

•

In the house, the doors and windows were
fitted for her frailness, somehow sized to
her small height. Every Sunday I imagined
Mary would outlive even me.

•

Wherever she is now, I wish she could
Teach me something spectacular—
Her recipe for chili or The hidden secret
she had for cards.

MORBID ANGEL

Benjamin Starkey

So many hours I've spent here. Hours have turned into days and sometimes nights. So much of my time has been spent here on the cool ground reading, writing, drawing, and sleeping. I've spent so much time here beneath this solemn figure, this lonely guardian, the keeper of this sad place . . . here beneath my morbid angel. Here in the stone forest everything is quiet, dead men tell no tales. Or do they? The dead can't hear me, but they listen anyway.

Few come here, and the silent solace of the place is my freedom, my peace from living world. Everyone rushes around living their lives without a thought to those who already have, so I come here to spend time with those less consumed with hurrying, their race is over and now they rest.

I brought my mother here once to see the Angel. She said she'd never seen a sad Angel, and certainly never one that was crying. I told her that even the Angels mourn the loss of those that once lived, and that there are shadows even in Heaven. She seemed content with that. Once I brought my fiancé here. We sat for hours and talked under the towering sentinel and held each other under her ever vigilant eye. She watched over us as she does all of her children here in the hollowed ground.

I often stare at the Angel and look over her smooth, weathered features. She's stood here for so long enduring the pangs of nature, the harshness of the elements, but she never wavers. For so long the wind and rain have struck upon her once finely chiseled details. The frozen death of our deep winters and the sweltering heat of our cruel summers have done no justice

to the beauty the sculptor once gave her, the life he once poured into her stone body and the soul that no one knows exists.

Her eyes are still strong and deep amongst the gray white wear around her cheeks. They pierce through to my core every time I glance into them. There's something so sacred about those undaunted eyes that keeps me from looking too long into them as if she was Medusa and my fate would be the same as hers, a stone prison for eternity. Her right arm lazily drapes over the edge of a large bible on the precipice of the marble foundation that she is forever poised upon. She kneels with a casual surrender at the base of the large cross behind her with her robes gently flowing around her slender physique. Her visage is a solemn reminder that even the immortal weep for the frail lives of humanity. Her large feathered wings tightly embrace her body curling to protect her, or perhaps the person's grave who she sits vigilant upon. Stained green from moss with every recess of her sculpt caked with the blackness of dirt and age she stands beautiful. I wonder where my fate resides. Will I be buried here amongst the dead? Will my Angel always stand watch?

Today is cool. Leaves have bunched themselves around the tombstones. A chill breeze washes over the late October landscape. The air is the color of cigarette smoke with heavy clouds lingering long and sluggishly like the last plume exhaled in a dimly lit lounge. The ashen gray suffocates the light from the sun choking out every last breath of life it saw fit to shower on an ungrateful planet.

I can hear the sound of gravel being driven on in the distance. I look out from the hill the Angel sits on to see the caravan of cars snake its way through the old cemetery past ages of lives and thousands of souls, the hush of the no longer living buried deep beneath the earth. The black hearse at the head of the slow moving group draws nearer to where I stand, but far enough away that neither of us disturbs the other.

I watch as the vehicles stop at a green tent pitched over a fresh grave surrounded by mounds of brown red clay filled soil. Gray folding chairs line the edge of the hole in ranks over the hardened ground, a solitary row set up beneath the edge of the canopy. Two gold poles line the edge of the hole, four black straps stretch across the poles to rest the casket on. I watch with a voyeurs' delight, hiding behind the Angel, just out of sight of the mourn-

ers. The caravan begins to unload its passengers. I recognize many of the vehicles and even more of the people exiting them. Dozens of cars sit quiet in the distance, and people I know walk slowly to the gravesite.

The procession makes a stop at the rear of the hearse to accept the body of their loved one into their temporary charge. I watch as my parents come into sight, first my mother, then my father. I see my brother and all of my sisters slowly walk to the chairs in the tent. Why didn't anyone tell me someone passed? Especially someone close enough to bring them all here. I know the new job has kept me busy and I haven't been around much, but even a voice message would have been nice. They could have called me or sent me a letter, or come to my place and let me know. I wonder who it is that has brought my whole family here.

I climb up on the huge cross to get a better view. The Angel stands firm. She does not scold me for what most would consider a desecrating action. I speak my apologies and try to get a better view. My heart begins to fill with rage as yet again I am left out. I feel the hairs all over my body stand up as a frigid breeze rips across my body once sheltered by the Angel. I watch in horror as I recognize my fiancé walking up to sit next to my mother embracing her as they sit as one in the darkness of this place. I watch my dad and my brother join a group of people I grew up with at the rear of the hearse. My stomach sinks as I search my mind for an answer to the question tearing at my mind.

The casket slowly rolls out of the black vehicle into the pall bearers' awaiting hands. I should be part of this. I feel the tears well up in my eyes as I wonder what dear soul they have come to bury that meant so much to all of them. More I wonder why no one included me. Everyone sat in the folding chairs as the pall bearers made the slow walk to set the casket gently on the black straps over the grave. The thick black straps sagged slightly under the weight of the metal box as it prepared to lower the coffin to its final resting place in the cool damp earth below.

A pastor stepped up to a small lectern and spoke a few words before bowing his head to pray. He snapped his bible shut with a grim finality and made his way to the edge of the grave as the casket lowered into the ground. He took up a small clump of the loose soil around the opening and dropped it in the hole as he muttered "ashes to ashes." My brother dropped

a wreath of mixed roses down the dark hole as the rest of the family made their way to the edge to drop in their own handfuls of dirt. My brother hugged my mother and wept furiously as my fiancé joined the embrace. My mother looked up to where I was perched with tears in her eyes and blew a slow kiss before turning back to the family. Does she know I'm here? Did she see me? Anger swelled in my chest and I jumped down to stand in the open. Another strong gust of cold air rushed through the graveyard and my mother glanced back one last time to the Angel on the hill.

A slow drizzle of rain began to patter across the ground. Rustling leaves and the splash of rain drops filled my ears as I watched the caravan load up and slowly depart the cemetery. When they were all out of sight I made my way down over the dying grass to the plot. The closer I got, the more nervous I became. Whose name would I see when I lifted that yellow cloth from atop that black marble headstone? I stopped over the grave and stared into the hole. Dirt and scattered flowers adorned the gun metal gray casket at the bottom. The ribbons on the wreath said: brother, son, friend and husband. Who the hell was buried here? I knelt down in front of the tombstone. The yellow cloth was blowing free. I could not yet see the name, just the inscription: "Till one day when the living meet the dead and together dance as one."

A single disquieting moment of realization swept over me. I felt a chill and a sadness I have never before endured, not a sadness for my loss but for those who felt this loss, for those that loved this person so much. I reached out and pulled the cloth free with my right hand and stared down at the mirrored surface below. Deep bold letters stared back at me with a haunting glare as I read my own name etched into that black surface. No wonder I wasn't invited. I was the guest of honor.

I stood and turned to head up the hill over the faded grass. The huge Angel stood her eternal vigil at the top of the hill. I sat down beneath the Angel and stared up into those eyes, those perfect haunting eyes, and watched as a single rain drop streaked down her cheek just beneath her left eye. There are shadows even in heaven, and the immortal weep for the frailty of the mortals they watch over. I laid back and rested my head against the stone knees of my one last companion, my forever guardian. I closed my eyes and went to sleep with the knowledge that I was not alone; I would always have my morbid Angel.

THE SUN AS WE THE SOUL

Danielle Weinhold

Rain subtly cooling, heat seeping
With the last haze of dusk
Disappearing in clouds darkening
Parting for the moon reflecting
The sun as we the soul
I reach for your hand
Gazing down at the asphalt glistening
Slick under streetlights,
A wave of diamonds embedded
In carbon and centuries heaving
Beneath one shaky breath
And a bated sigh searching

Searching out my scent, this liquid
Night disguising thickly, eternally
Courting the meaning that must
Be at the core of our suffering
Dutifully we will pierce the flesh
And consume the consummated
We will eat our way through history
Digesting every travesty
Leaving only that core remaining
Until miserably full we will
Either explode the myth of destiny
Or shit our way to a new beginning

CAKE STORY

Polly Wainwright

When I went to the store I bought butter and eggs to make a cake for your birthday. Instead of a cake, however, I decided the flour and water would better serve as wallpaper paste, and the eggs became a treatment for my hair.

With my new floured wallpaper, and my shiny manageable hair, I decided to make a night of it with a soon to be former stranger from my future. His name was Ted.

Ted worked in a deli. Well, he owned the deli, and worked there amongst the food and the sawdust and the sense of living in another time. His monastery of rosemary and vinegar. An anchorite of beef.

Ted came to my house, at my request, even though we'd had only the occasional sliced pastrami between us in the past.

Immediately we went to my bedroom. To admire the new wallpaper. And my shiny hair.

When the time came for Ted to admire my shiny, manageable body, he said, "No, wait."

Wait? I thought. Wait for what? For my wallpaper to curl, or my hair to curl, or my body to curl with age?

But wait we did while I stared curiously, wondering what he could want but what was easiest.

What was easiest was to lie back, between my freshly baked walls, and pretend to be interested while Ted pretended to care. That was the easiest thing to do.

But Ted was not an easy man, and he began to slice at my life and my mind with his No. 2 blade.

"Tell me your favorite kind of mustard, and most exotic spot for a picnic. What book do you wish you had written? Why do you have eggshells in your hair? And what is the name of the man whose picture is in your wastebasket?"

Obligation. Small talk. Short-term memory conversation.

Why does he want to know this? All he needs to know is that I will be cooperative for exactly 27 minutes, require no cuddling afterward, and will be most grateful if he never calls me again.

I do, however, expect to get the leanest of pastrami on my next shopping trip.

But Ted is waiting patiently. He's had plenty of practice, waiting for people faced with too many choices to make up their minds.

"When I was a boy, I slept in a bedroom with flowered wallpaper, too. It had been my grandmother's room, and I never wanted to change it."

Ted offers me a small sample of the possibilities.

But vulnerability is an acquired taste, even if he is willing to go first.

I think if I wait long enough, Ted will start to take off my clothes, or his clothes, or at least give up and go home.

But all he does is pick an eggshell out of my hair.

I begin to think, what am I waiting for? For my wallpaper to curl, or for my hair to curl, or for my soul to curl with fear?

So I talk about books and mustard, visiting churches in Italy, and the songs that make me laugh and cry at the same time. I tell him your name, and why looking at your picture makes me so sad.

Then we go into the kitchen where we find more flour and eggs and bake you a birthday cake. We use his grandmother's special recipe for the frosting.

I NEED A SMOKE

Joe Neal

I wait-
it's dark,
the car is off,
the radio on.
Our plans are my life,
but like suggestions to you.
This isn't any fun,
hoping for someone, to show,
you know will never come.
Maybe the kids are sick, or your
husband is home.
Perhaps I'll never know
for certain.
Still, I
wait.

A WORKING MAN'S PRAYER

Danielle Weinhold

Christ, where's the wine?
I worked all day
For this moment
So will you

Change these waters
Slick down my skin
And kiss the tired
From these muscles

Let us relax and reclaim
Stretching backs and bills
Valuing time
Let us celebrate

Christ, I'm due back at work
First thing in the morning
So could you turn
This wine into oil?

LITERARY ESSAYS

LANGSTON HUGHES

A TRUE HARLEM RENAISSANCE POET

Sylvia Fry

During the 1920's there was a movement in the arts and literature that harbored "extraordinary creativity [. . .] for black Americans and that much of that creativity found its focus in the activities of African Americans living in New York City, particularly in the district of Harlem" (Gates Jr., McKay 953). This movement is known as the Harlem Renaissance. Some of the great African American writers that emerged from this movement include Claude MacKay, Zora Neale Hurston, Countee Cullen, Alian Locke, Jean Toomer, James Weldon Johnson and Langston Hughes. These writers were striving to establish a voice for African Americans while at the same time "following modernist Ezra Pound's demand to 'make it new'" ("The New Modernists" 27). As stated in *The Journal of Blacks in Higher Education,* "the standard literary theory is that black writers of the Harlem Renaissance were able to assert their collective identity by means of unique language, expression, and energy" ("The New Modernists" 27). Hughes embodies the ideals of the Harlem Renaissance by giving African Americans a new distinct voice through the people and places brought to life in his poems, and through his incorporation of jazz. These ideals are especially evident in four of his earlier poems, "Jazzonia," "Harlem Night Club," "Cabaret" and "Laughers."

The Harlem Renaissance occurred from about 1919 to 1940, however the crux of the movement was mainly during the twenties and ended with the onset of the Great Depression. Many blacks migrated North around

this time looking to escape the racist South seeking for better opportunities. Due to great industrial expansion in the North there was a "demand for labor that made many employers eager to recruit and hire black workers. This demand intensified when the United States entered World War I (1914–1918) in 1917, and jobs previously held but white males, themselves now serving in the armed forces, became available to newcomers from the South" (Gates Jr., McKay 954). As a result of this migration, many African Americans huddled to New York and other large cities. Due to over-development of Harlem, it became an affordable place for African Americans to live, and the center for the African American Renaissance writers. Harlem was "the choicest area for settlement open to blacks because prejudice and custom sharply limited the neighborhoods available to them" (Candaele 81). An editor of the African American magazine, *Survey Graphic*, described Harlem as "the greatest Negro community in the world. More than that, there has been a flaring out of cultural life there. The Negro is expressing himself in new ways" (Nadell 2).

One way that Langston Hughes helped to express the new African American voice in his poetry is through the characters he chose to write about. Alian Locke, a fellow Harlem Renaissance writer, had this to say about Hughes's poetry: "The author apparently loves the plain people in every aspect of their lives, their gin-drinking carousals, their sweet brawls, their tenement publicity, and their slum matings and partings, and reveals this segment of Negro life as it has never been shown before" (77). His dedication to displaying African Americans in both a celebratory and realistic way is one of the characteristics of Hughes' work that encapsulates the ideals of the Harlem Renaissance. Critic Hoyt W. Fuller remarks that Hughes "chose to identify with plain black people—not because it required less effort and sophistication, but precisely because he saw more truth and profound significance in doing so" ("(James) Langston Hughes" 7).

In his poem, "Jazzonia," an otherwise ordinary "dancing girl whose eyes are bold/Lifts high a dress of silken gold" (lines 5-6). The girl is then compared to Eve and Cleopatra,

Were Eve's eyes
In the First garden

Just a bit too bold?
Was Cleopatra gorgeous
In a gown of gold? (9-13)

The speaker is celebrating the life and beauty of a common "dancing girl" and by comparing her to Eve and Cleopatra the speaker is acknowledging her potential as more than just a dancer in a Harlem club. Both of these women are idolized in American culture for their beauty. Yet, both are also notorious for their downfalls—Eve with Eden and Cleopatra with Egypt. The speaker of the poem is questioning whether their beauty was what caused each of their downfalls. Likewise, the speaker of the poem might be alluding to the fact that the dancing girl's beauty might get her into trouble. Also, the poem mentions the "Six long-headed jazzers" who are playing in the cabaret (4). The fact that they are merely a numbered group suggests that they are just common jazz musicians, nothing out of the ordinary about them. The term "long-headed" could be referring to their African roots. Although not much is mentioned about these jazzers specifically, they are what frame the poem, being mentioned both in lines four and seventeen. By doing this, the speaker is not only establishing their importance in the cabaret scene but also the importance of their music. According to Martha Nadell, in her book, *Enter the New Negroes*, this poem "celebrate[s] black life, using colloquialisms and everyday images" (53). These images of the "dancing girl" and "jazzers" are that of ordinary Harlem night life.

In another of Hughes's poems, "Harlem Night Club," the ordinary, plain folk are again celebrated. The people who are in the night club are described as "sleek black boys" (1), "gay black boys" (7), "Dark brown girls" (10), and "White ones, brown ones" (14). All of these descriptions are simple; they seem to embody the scene of anybody in any Harlem nightclub. Hughes writes this poem in such a way that "this experience is not one of the 'hip' few, but for *all* the jazz people, the 'low-down folks,' the 'common people' to whom he dedicates several of his poems" (Lenz 323). Several of the lines mention both whites and blacks dancing together, which could be seen in many Harlem clubs. The "White girls' eyes/Call gay black boys" (6-7) and the "Dark brown girls/In blond men's arms"

(10-11). Again, these lines are just setting the scene of any club and celebrating the everyday scenes of them. In Harlem "All classes and colors met face to face" (Candaele 79).

This poem is not only bringing to light the people who are at the club but also their attitude and outlook on life. There is a carefree and easy attitude, yet not a wholly optimistic view. They begin by questioning, "Tomorrow . . . who knows?" and answer with the exuberant expression of "Dance today!" (4-5). Later in the poem the question, "What do you know/About tomorrow/ Where all paths go?" is asked (15-17). This time the question goes unanswered for a few lines and is followed by the sounds of the club, the dancers and the band, "Jazz-boys, jazz-boys,/Play, plAY, PLAY!" (18-19). The alternative to thinking about life's pressing questions is to dance and listen to the jazz band. This Harlem nightclub represents a place "in which all the worries of everyday life are suspended" (Lenz 323). However, the statement "Tomorrow [. . .] is darkness" suggests that although these people could get the worries out of their mind it was only temporary, and their true reality is always in the back of their mind (20). The poem ends with "Joy today!" which helps to give the poem a realistic tone (21). By including both the glamorous and not so glamorous images of Harlem in his poetry, a true-to-life image of Harlem is created. This is one of the characteristics that defines Hughes as a different and new voice for African Americans. According to Gilbert Osofsky, in his article, "Symbols of the Jazz Age: The New Negro and Harlem Discovered," "Whatever seemed thrilling, bizarre or sensuous about Harlem life was made a part of the community's image; whatever was tragic about it, ignored" (235). Obviously, Langston Hughes was an exception to this; he broke away from this mold even more in his poem "Cabaret."

Like in "Harlem Night Club," the speaker of this poem also asks a question. Similarly, there is really no definite answer at the end of the poem, which does give the poem a sense of hopelessness. The question asked is "Does a jazz-band ever sob?" (Hughes, "Cabaret" 1). The jazz-band seems to be more of an object than a group of people when it is first talked about in the poem. The jazz-band is mentioned in a kind of generic way in a way that it could be any jazz band in any club. In the second line, "They say a jazz-band's gay," the "they" is ambiguous and seems to be some sort of outsider, at least not one of the people in the club. The speaker of this poem

does not seem to believe this statement and does not even bother to name who said it. The conversation seems to be interrupted when the speaker breaks in with " Yet as the vulgar dancers whirled/And the wan night wore away" (3-4). The description of the dancers as vulgar is not a very detailed description, yet it gives the impression that these dancers are more important than the "they" mentioned in line two. Again, it is general enough so that anybody reading this poem can picture any dancer they have seen in any cabaret. One of the dancers said "she heard the jazz-band sob/When the little dawn was grey" (5-6). In these last two lines the jazz-band is almost humanized, given feeling, whereas in the beginning of the poem they seem more like an object that is merely debated over. The band cries at night, maybe because the customers are gone and their job is done, or maybe they are crying simply because they are tired or sad. The speaker leaves it up for the reader to decide. Either way, the scene of the cabaret, which were usually "centers of lively, high-quality performances," is a sad but realistic scene (Candaele 86). Hughes acknowledges this in his autobiography, *The Big Sea,* when he says, "All of us know that the gay and sparkling life of the so-called Negro Renaissance of the 20's was not so gay and sparkling beneath the surface as it looked" (Hughes 1327). He revolutionized the way the cabarets and nightclubs in Harlem were described, while giving a new face and voice to the people of Harlem. This is especially evident in Hughes's poem, "Laughers." The poem was titled "My People" when it was first published, which speaks to the fact that Hughes did associate himself with the subjects of his poetry. According to Skip Gates, in his article "Of Negroes Old and New," "Langston Hughes saw himself as a representative-qua poet-of the basic black man, and as representative, he saw himself as a poet. He saw the poet's position as that at the point of consciousness of his people, making councils the subconscious or the unconscious strivings and longings, hopes and fears, of a people" (56). By focusing on "the culture of the black everyman [. . .] he wanted his art to reflect the beauty of black 'low-life'" (Gates 56). "Laughers" is about Hughes's people.

These people are described by what they do for a living. The occupations mentioned in the poem include entertainers such as, "Dream-singers,/ Story-tellers,/Dancers" (1-3) along with "Comedians in vaudeville,/And

band-men in circuses" (17-18). Also mentioned are the "Jazzers" that appear in many of his poems (12). Then, there are those employed in the service industry, such as "Dish-washers, / Elevator-boys, / Ladies' maids" (6-8), the "Cooks, / Waiters" (10-11), and the "Nurses of babies" (13). In addition to these professions mentioned, there is also some the "Crap-shooters" (9), "Rounders" (15), and "Number writers" (16). While gambling might not always be categorized as a profession, it was a way that some of these people made their money. The jobs mentioned range from the glamorous to the desperate and that is one of the reasons this poem seems so realistic; both the positive and the negative aspects of these peoples' lives are mentioned. These people are those that Hughes sees, "united as 'my people,' in spite of all the differences in their occupations, activities, social or moral status" (Lenz 323). The thing that all of these people have in common is that they are all "Loud laughers in the hands of Fate" (4). The last four lines of the poem reiterate the point:

> Laughers?
> Yes, laughers . . . laughers . . . laughers-
> Loud-mouthed laughers in the hands
> Of Fate. (29-32)

After hearing all of the occupations listed, somebody is asking whether these people can still be laughing and enjoying life. The speaker of the poem answers that they are enjoying life, not only laughing but "Loud-mouthed," unashamed. These people are doing the best with what they have or with what fate has decided for them. For many African Americans, "the 1920s was a decade of unrivaled optimism, and all through the generations of slavery and neo-slavery, black American culture had of necessity emphasized the power of endurance and survival, of love and laughter, as the only efficacious response to the painful circumstances surrounding their lives" (Gates Jr., McKay 957). This poem shows how, even in the twenties, African Americans were still using laughter as a response to their situation. This poem epitomizes Hughes's attitude that "the low-down folks, the so-called common element, [. . .] are the majority-may the Lord

be praised [. . .] And perhaps these common people will give to the world its truly great Negro artist, one who is not afraid to be himself" (Hughes, *The Big Sea* 1312). The people in "Laughers"are the majority to Hughes, and they not only have the ability to become great artists or anything else they want to be, but they also provide inspiration for the artist or anybody else in their community. These "laughers" are a sign of hope and optimism in an otherwise not so happy setting. In this poem, Hughes brings to life a whole community of "his people" and celebrates them and all of their attributes.

Another aspect of the African American culture that he incorporated and celebrated in his works was the music of his people. During the 1920's, Harlem became "a national symbol, the symbol of the Jazz Age" (Osofsky 235). According to Kerry Candaele, in his book *Bound for Glory: 1910–1930*, "Hughes's poetry was revolutionary in its use of jazz and blues rhythms and idioms as well as the cadences of Harlem street talk" (96). One way that Hughes makes jazz distinct to African American culture is by connecting jazz to the African roots of his community.

The poem "Jazzonia" starts out with images that are representative of Africa: "Oh, silver tree!/Oh, shining rivers of the soul!" and are repeated two other times in the poem (1-2). Those lines are immediately followed by "In a Harlem cabaret"(3). "The imaginative world of Africa [. . .] and the cabaret scene merge in the playing of 'six-long-headed jazzers' and the dancing of a girl," which associates jazz as distinctly African American (Lenz 323). By doing this, Hughes was not only giving the so-called "New Negroes" of the twenties their own voice, but he was also giving them their own music distinct to their culture. Gunter Lenz, in his article "Symbolic Space, Communal Rituals, and The Surreality of The Urban Ghetto: Harlem in Black Literature From the 1920s to the 1960s," compares the cabaret scene to ancient African rituals. He asserts that the last two lines of the poem "confirms the participation of the audience in the ritual: In a whirling cabaret/Six long-headed jazzers play" (323). Hughes is not only likening the rituals of Africa to the Harlem jazz scene, but he is also likening the people. The jazzers are "long-headed," which is a term that is often associated with the anthropological assertion that certain tribes of Africans

had skulls that were longer than typical. This poem, along with others, "made a case for jazz as a connection to the starry dynamo of the ancient transcendent" (Jerving 9).

Another of Hughes's poems that associates jazz with African roots is "Harlem Night Club." Hughes's descriptions of "Sleek black boys" (1), Black boys' lips/Grin jungle joys" (8-9) and "Dark brown girls" (10) evoke feelings of Africa, especially the "jungle joys." The scene of this night club in Harlem can easily be seen as a "place where the jazz people can experience the new urban rhythm of life as one of communitas, in a kind of modern urban tribal ritual (Lenz 323). As Hughes writes in his own essay, "The Negro Artist and the Racial Mountain," "jazz to me is one of the inherent expressions of Negro life in America; the eternal tom-tom beating in the Negro soul" (1314). To him, jazz is as natural to the African Americans as the beating of the drum in an African ritual.

Hughes's poem "Laughers" can almost be heard as being sung to the beat of a tom-tom. The first three lines, "Dream-singers,/Story-tellers,/ Dancers" can all be associated with both modern Harlem life as well as the African tradition. The fact that these are the first three lines and that they are repeated in the poem suggests that these are the most important to Hughes. All of these people are important because they are the ones who are keeping alive their African roots by telling stories passed down from their ancestors, by singing ancient tribal songs, and by dancing in traditional rituals. Likewise, these people have made careers out of these things in modern day Harlem. To the speaker, all of "My people" and all that makes up the African American culture are a mixture of both African roots and modern day. The singers and dancers that have always been important to African culture are now incorporated into the Harlem life by jazz. Both about Harlem and Africa, the speaker would express:

> Dancers-
> God! What dancers!
> Singers-
> God! What singers!
> Singers and dancers
> Dancers and laughers. (23-28)

This poem blends both African roots and modern day jazz music in Harlem to make up a people of laughers "who are not afraid of spirituals [. . .] and jazz is their child" (Hughes, "The Negro Artist and the Racial Mountain" 1312).

In another of Hughes's poems jazz plays a significant role in African American culture but not necessarily in relation to its African roots. In his poem, "Cabaret," Hughes humanizes the sound of jazz. The jazzband does not only represent a band in a cabaret, it can be seen as the African American race in general. The "they" could be seen as the white race that might blindly assume that since the band is playing upbeat music, they must be happy. The speaker of this poem dispels this idea by saying that the jazzband does indeed sob, despite the music it is playing. Hughes writes in his essay, "The Negro Artist and the Racial Mountain," "Most of my poems are racial in theme and treatment, derived from the life I know. In many of them I try to grasp and hold some of the meanings and rhythms of jazz" (1313). "Cabaret" seems to be a poem that encompasses both racial issues and jazz together, associating both with joy and pain.

Langston Hughes, one of the greatest products of the Harlem Renaissance, not only wrote according to the ideals of the movement, he also wrote to give African Americans new voice in literature. Through his poems "Jazzonia," "Harlem Night Club," "Cabaret," and "Laughers," Hughes succeeded in creating a distinct voice for the African American culture through the people he wrote about and through his use of jazz. By writing about and to the "black everyman," Hughes epitomized the writers of the Harlem Renaissance who "infused their works with an ebullience, the result of a firm conviction that they had a new and unique idea of what their world was, especially in relationship to America" (Gates 49). Hughes did know what his world consisted of—it was his people, their roots, and their music—and that is exactly what he wrote about in his poetry.

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VALUABLE LESSONS LEARNED THROUGH AN OUTSIDER'S EYES:

THE POETRY OF LOLA RIDGE AND JUDITH WRIGHT

Belinda Wheeler

Throughout the years in academia and the literary world, there have been many who believe people that belong to one race should not study, critique, or write about any ethnic group other than their own. The reasons for this belief are wide and varied, ranging from racial issues to the view that others will not be able to truly appreciate an ethnic group and could misrepresent the truth because of their limited knowledge. While some parts of this argument may seem warranted, if one truly examines the issue, he or she will find the critics' evidence is lacking and hearsay dictates their reasoning. While there are very few writers or academics in the world that have challenged this belief, there are two notable poets, Lola Ridge and Judith Wright, who chose to write about numerous subjects, including issues outside their own ethnic group. Reading Ridge's "Lullaby" and Wright's "Bora Ring," scholars' discover poems that are very rich in description and thoughtfulness towards the other ethnic group they are writing about. Ultimately the poems make a powerful statement not only about the issues many minority races face, but

they also demonstrate why others should be able to write about people outside of their own ethnic group.

Before discussing Ridge's poem "Lullaby" it is important to learn about her background. Born Rose Emily Ridge, the poet that would later be known as Lola Ridge was born in Dublin, Ireland, in 1873. At the age of thirteen she moved to New Zealand, and married when she was twenty-one. After her marriage failed, Ridge moved to Sydney, Australia, where she studied painting. In 1907, Ridge moved to America, changed her name to Lola, and lived there as a "poet and painter" until her death in 1941 ("Lola"). Described as "the nearest prototype in her time to the proletarian poet of class conflict, voicing social protest or revolutionary idealism," Ridge's poetry was powerful and although she is not widely known, her poetry, at the time, made her widely respected (Quartermain 354). Known as a "champion of the working class . . . who took her radical politics seriously," William Carlos Williams mocked Ridge's choice of "ascetic artistic lifestyle" when she could have had "a more comfortable life" following her "later literary success" ("Lola"). Despite criticism, "[E]arnest and selfless in her dedication to the working poor," Ridge chose not to place herself above those she cared about most ("Lola").

Given her strong sense of identification with those less fortunate then herself, it was inevitable that Ridge would soon start producing poetry that critiqued injustice, or merely wrote about the state of certain people's circumstances in order to present their situation to a wider audience. Ridge's first notable attempt at this was a "sequence of poems called 'The Ghetto' . . . [where she] explore[d] the life of Jewish immigrants in New York ghettos" ("Lola"). Publishing these and other poems in her book The Ghetto and Other Poems (1918), Ridge also included the work "Lullaby," which discusses "the murder of a black baby by white women during the East St. Louis race riots" ("Lola"). Critics found Ridge's work within her book "rough but powerful" and consequently, her poems quickly "made a bold impression on the literary scene" ("Lola").

Ridge's work "Lullaby" is one of her most poignant poems that addresses the issue of race. The poet was so moved by the tragic events that occurred during the race riots in 1917 that she was compelled to write about it. While Ridge's poem concerning the particular incident that occurred to the African

American baby is heart wrenching, there were similar horrendous acts of brutality that occurred during this period. According to Allen Grimshaw, "there were eighteen major interracial disturbances in America between 1915 and 1919" (qtd. in "Race"). It was during this time that many African Americans "migrated north en masse" looking to fill many of the newly created jobs "from the outbreak of war in Europe" ("Race"). During this exodus, many African Americans "challenged the concept of white supremacy and the established order," while many whites felt they had stolen their jobs and invaded their community ("Race"). Throughout these years, there were several small outbreaks of violence; however, on July 2, 1917, the situation between the two groups exploded. With the whites going on a rampage, "over 200 homes" were destroyed and "over 200 people" were reportedly killed ("Race"). It has been stated that "No other riot in American history claimed the lives of more African-Americans than the one that raged in East St. Louis during that hot summer day in 1917" ("Race").

Having an outsider write a poem about the East St. Louis riots and focusing on the tragic events surrounding the death of a defenseless African American infant is poignant because it shows an unbiased honesty towards the incident. That is, because Ridge was white, was not American, and was not living in the area at the time of the riots, she could look past the color of skin and see the incident objectively. Thus, given her outsider status, Ridge was perfectly situated to write her poem "Lullaby."

Comprising of eight stanzas, with four lines in each, Ridge's poem "Lullaby" is highly poetic, and extremely moving. Fashioning the poem as a child's lullaby, the reader first thinks the poem will follow a traditional lullaby, with heartwarming images and a caring, loving tone. The speaker, which the reader later finds out is a white woman, starts the poem, with the opening words "Rock-a-by baby" (Ridge 1). Before long, however, the reader understands that this lullaby is very different from any other.

In the first stanza, which rhymes a,b,a,b, the speaker first appears to be caring for the young African American baby. Singing "Rock-a-by baby" (1), the speaker seems as though she is trying to settle the baby and care for it, since the child's "mammy is down" (3). Even the reference, "Lil' coon baby" (3) on line three does not appear distressing as she appears to be insinuating her "steady an' white . . . Han's that hold yuh" will protect the child (4).

Before long, despite the speaker's upbeat tone, the poem starts to become dark and distressing.

The second stanza of Ridge's poem continues with the a,b,a,b rhyme scheme; however, this time the racist slurs deepen, with the speaker referring to the baby as a "piccaninny" (5) and "mah bit-of-honey-comb" (8). Another distressing aspect of this stanza is the speaker's choice to give graphic details about what is occurring, rather than taking the baby to a safe place and distracting the child with soothing, positive words. Instead, the speaker describes the "gran' blaze / [which is] Lickin' up the roof an' the sticks of" the baby's home (5-6). After describing the violent scene that is unfolding, the speaker jokingly says to the child, "Cain't yuh sleep, mah bit-of-honey-comb? (8).

Following on with the vivid description of what is taking place in St. Louis during the Race Riots of 1917, the speaker continues the third stanza with the nursery rhyme line, "Rock-a-by baby" (9). Changing the rhyming scheme to an a,a,b,b format, the speaker appears to be increasing the momentum of the poem, which would be pleasurable if she was not describing such a horrendous scene. Noting the "cherries" (10) that are drifting by, she appears to be mocking the bloody African Americans that have been attacked by the whites. First noting their aimless walking, the speaker then points out to the baby the "Bright red cherries spilled on the groun'—/ [and the] Piping-hot (i.e. burning) cherries at nuthin' a poun'!" (11-12). Speaking in such a relaxed manner and showing no emotion towards the African Americans, demonstrates the cold nature of the speaker, prompting grave concern in the reader's mind for the safety of the defenseless African American child in her arms.

In the fourth, fifth, and six stanzas, the speaker's words continue sending chills up the reader's spine as she heartlessly continues the dark nursery rhyme. Instructing the "lil' black-bug—doan yuh weep" (13), the speaker goes into more graphic detail about what is taking place. Telling the child that his or her "Daddy's run away an' mammy's in a heap / By her own fron' door in the blazin' heat" (14-15), the speaker continues by stating that all the African Americans are running "Outah the shacks like warts on the street" (16). Joyously celebrating with the other whites who are brutally attacking the African Americans, the speaker heartlessly describes how the

baby's mother has been beaten to death, "With a stone at her hade an' a stone on her heart, / An' her mouth like a red plum, broken apart . . ." (19-20). Moving from the slain mother to "the big bonfire [the] white folks" (23) have made, the speaker coolly notes how the items they are throwing into the fire, such as the belongings of the African Americans, are "Adding brave colors to the [dancing flames]" (22).

While the scenes up to this point have been perplexing, the most disturbing, at least in relation to the innocent young baby, would have to be from lines twenty-four onwards. Finishing up the sixth stanza, the speaker closes by noting "the big bonfire [the] white folks make—/ Such gran' doin's fo' a lil' coon's sake!" (23-24). These words are truly distressing given the speaker's behavior towards the baby, the baby's family, and the treatment of other African Americans. Given the behavior of the speaker, her words appear to be foreshadowing a ghastly finale. Leading into the final two stanzas of the poem, she continues to reveal her evil plans for the child. Seeming to whisper in the child's ear, the speaker says:

> Hear all the eagah feet runnin' in town—
> See all the willin' han's . . .
> . . . that are wonderful, steady an' white!
> To toss up a lil' babe, blinkin' an' brown . . . (25-28)

Reminding the baby that he or she is surrounded by willing white hands that want to destroy all African Americans is unsettling for both the child and the reader, leaving both to feel like something shocking is about to occur. With no one to protect the innocent baby, the speaker rocks the "baby—higher an' higher" (29), and callously throws the infant into the fire. Without showing any signs of remorse, the speaker joyfully concludes the lullaby by singing "Soun' may yuh sleep in yo' cradle o' fire! / Rock-a-by baby, hushed in the flame . . ." (31-32).

Discussing Ridge's poem "Lullaby," Quartermain states, "Part of her success had undoubtedly to do with the [poem's] shock value" (358). Retelling the painful truth about a real life incident that occurred during the race riots in East St. Louis, where a "Negro baby [was] thrown into a burning house by white women," was "singled out for praise" by critics,

states Quartermain (358). Following on from Quartermain's comments, Anne P. Rice also believes Ridge's "Lullaby," written in 1919, is extremely powerful. As Rice states:

> On July 2, 1917, a mob of white men, women, and children burned and destroyed nearly half a million dollars' worth of black-owned property, drove six thousand African Americans out of their homes, and shot, burned, and hanged to death . . . [many] by low estimates thirty-nine African American men, women, and children. By choosing one incident in which the mothers of other children viciously rock and sing to their victim before tossing it into the fire, Ridge captures a barbarity that transcends gender and age. (247)

Adding to Rice's comments, the fact that Ridge was an outsider and a noted poet, it could be argued that her poem also "captures a barbarity that transcends" race and geography (Rice 247).

Like Ridge, Australian born and raised Judith Wright wrote poetry on a variety of subjects, including minorities that suffered from the actions of the white majority. Wright chose to write several poems concerning the plight of the Australian Aborigines. She was "born on May 31, 1915, in Armidale, New South Wales" (Ramazani, Ellman, and O'Clair 111). Living in a remote part of Australia, Wright was educated "through a correspondence course" until the age of twelve (Ramazani, Ellman, and O'Clair 111). As an adult she studied at the University of Sydney and chose the unusual step of taking "English literature courses alone rather than the usual variety of courses" (Ramazani, Ellman, and O'Clair 111).

Already having a great passion for the land and its wild animals, Wright soon "became an impassioned advocate for the natural environment and Aboriginal rights" (Ramazani, Ellman, and O'Clair 111). Having "been on this continent somewhere in excess of sixty thousand years," Wright was deeply saddened by all the Aborigines had lost at the hands of white settlers in a little over two hundred years (Brooks 51-52). As Wright herself wrote, "The two threads of my life, the love of the land itself and the deep unease over the fate of its original people [started influencing my poetry to the point where] the rest of my life would be influenced by that connection" (qtd. in

Walker). According to the Poetry National Review, "Early on she [Wright] was made aware of Aboriginal dispossession and the brutal inequality of the terra nullius position of the national government. 'Niggers Leap,' 'Bora Ring' and other poems explore this theme" (Editorial). Like Ridge, Wright was not intimidated by her outsider status and continued to write poetry about issues that were of major interest to her.

Regarding the importance of Wright's work, it has been said that, she "did in Australia, and with fewer literary resources, some of the things that Adrienne Rich and Eavan Boland do in the United States and Ireland. She marked out a space, not only for the experiences of women in poetry, but for the experience of other voices that history had driven to the margins" (Editorial). Furthermore Wright's peers have noted, "Like the older native peoples of her country she has a sense of good and of evil. Moral rather than metaphysical, her poems declare; she moved among personal, social and ethical concerns" (Editorial). It could be argued that Lola Ridge, like Wright, also felt this way. That she, too, "had a sense of good and of evil" and given this she was compelled to write her poem "Lullaby" (Editorial).

Having such strong feelings towards the plight of Australian Aboriginals and all they have lost at the hands of the white European settlers prompted Wright to compose several poems including "Bora Ring," which she published in 1946. Within the four stanzas, Wright discusses Bora Ring, which the editors Ramazani, Ellman, and O'Clair state, used to be the "Site of initiation ceremonies held by Australian Aborigines" (112). In the poem, the speaker "laments the death of the wild country and the dying out of Aboriginal civilization" (Ramanazi, Ellman, and O'Clair 111).

In the first stanza of "Bora Ring," the speaker states that the ancient rituals of the Aborigines are dead. The speaker laments, "The song is gone . . . / the ritual useless" (Wright 1-3). The dances, which used to be performed for thousands of years, now lay "secret with the [deceased] dancers in the earth" (2). Like the tribal dance, "the tribal story / [has also been] lost in an alien tale" (3-4). That is, since white man's settlement just over two hundred years earlier, the native people have lost a sense of themselves because of the "alien (European) tale[s]" they have been forced to accept instead (4). Summing up the first stanza of the poem, Gerard Hall believes it reflects "the sadness of a people dispossessed of land and culture."

Discussing what remains today in the second stanza, the speaker states, "Only the grass stands up / to mark the dancing-ring" of old (5-6). According to John Hawke, "The 'ring' is eternity in its traditional symbolism," and the destruction of this traditional symbol at the hands of the white settlers highlights the destruction they have caused (173). Now that "the dancing-ring" is gone, the "apple-gums," which can live for hundreds of years, are the only living things remaining that witnessed the ancient dance rituals of the Aborigines (6). Remembering part of what they witnessed, the speaker states, the "apple-gums" (6) try to "posture and mime a past corroboree" (7), but because they were only witnesses and not participants they can only "murmur a broken chant" (8). While this section of Wright's poem is moving because of the loss the Australian Aborigines have suffered at the hands of the white settlers, it is also important as it reflects Wright's passion for nature. By incorporating nature with the Aborigines' plight, Wright eloquently ties in "the two threads of" her life within this stanza of "Bora Ring" (Wright qtd. in Walker).

In the third stanza of the poem, the speaker reflects on other aspects of the Aborigines' way of life. Known as people that lead a hunter-gatherer lifestyle, where the men would hunt animals and the women would gather shrubs and other foods, the speaker notes "The hunter is gone" (9), as is the spear he would have used. This prized possession from times past is now "splintered underground" (10), along with "the dancers in the earth" (2). Like the dancers and the spears, "the painted bodies" (10) that used to roam the countryside freely were quickly "breathed," or invaded by the European settlers, and then "forgot[ten]" (11). Given all that was once abundant and now is lost, the speaker closes the third stanza by lamenting, "The nomad [Aborigines'] feet are still" (12).

Concluding the poem, the speaker discusses the implications for the few white Australians that care about the Aborigines and the loss the native people have suffered. Noting, "Only the rider's heart / halts at a sightless shadow, and unsaid word" (13-14), the speaker points out there are very few people who pause and notice the destruction of the Aborigines' heritage and way of life. While acknowledging this loss is significant, the speaker also seems to highlight the burden these enlightened few face. For it is those that notice the "unsaid word / that fastens in the blood the

ancient curse, / the fear as old as Cain" (14-16) that know the action of their forefathers was similar to God's curse on Cain. That is, by destroying something as ancient, and as priceless as the history of the Aborigines, the current generation of whites is haunted by the past and is cursed by it (Ramazani, Ellman, and O'Clair 111). As Veronica Brady states, Wright's poem 'Bora Ring' highlights "the presence of Aboriginal suffering amongst us as a wound from which we all suffer" (86). In this way, Wright is like Ridge, in that the white majority will forever have to suffer from the actions of the past. That is, the gross discrimination and violence the minorities have had to endure, at the hands of the majority, cannot be easily forgotten, nor should they be.

By discussing people from outside their own ethnic group, both Lola Ridge and Judith Wright have left a remarkable impact for generations to come. Through their graphic details, honest and commentary, they have revealed the plight of minorities, such as African Americans and Australian Aborigines to the majority. Through "Lullaby" and "Bora Ring," both poets remind a worldwide audience of the past and truthfully display the horrendous consequences the afflicted parties have had to face. By doing this, both poets successfully raise the consciousness of people both inside and outside of various racial groups, thereby promoting understanding and building bridges between the two groups. Given all these poets were able to achieve with these two poems, it is clear that the old belief system that people outside of an ethnic group should not write about others is short-sighted and narrow-minded. As Lola Ridge and Judith Wright's poetry shows, the benefits for both the majority and the minority are too great to ignore. It is only through the process of honestly highlighting important events or situations through a medium such as poetry that promotes open discussion of issues. Limiting this process to people who only belong to the one ethnic group does not create a forum of discussion. In a democracy, actions by poets such as Lola Ridge and Judith Wright should be praised and encouraged. Only then can minorities and majorities work together to change many wrongs occurring in society.

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LULLABY

Lola Ridge

Rock-a-by baby, woolly and brown . . .
(There's a shout at the door an' a big red light . . .)
Lil' coon baby, mammy is down . . .
Han's that hold yuh are steady an' white . . .

Look piccaninny—such a gran' blaze
Lickin' up the roof an' the sticks of home—
Ever see the like in all yo' days!
—Cain't yuh sleep, mah bit-of-honey-comb?

Rock-a-by baby, up to the sky!
Look at the cherries driftin' by—
Bright red cherries spilled on the groun'—
Piping-hot cherries at nuthin' a poun'!

Hush, mah lil' black-bug—doan yuh weep.
Daddy's run away an' mammy's in a heap
By her own fron' door in the blazin' heat
Outah the shacks like warts on the street . . .

An' the singin' flame an' the gleeful crowd
Circlin' aroun' . . . won't mammy be proud!
With a stone at her hade an' a stone on her heart,
An' her mouth like a red plum, broken apart . . .

See where the blue an' khaki prance,
Adding brave colors to the dance
About the big bonfire white folks make—
Such gran' doin's fo' a lil' coon's sake!

Hear all the eagah feet runnin' in town—
See all the willin' han's reach outah night—
Han's that are wonderful, steady an' white!
To toss up a lil' babe, blinkin' an' brown . . .

Rock-a-by baby—higher an' higher!
Mammy is sleepin' an' daddy's run lame . . .
(Soun' may yuh sleep in yo' cradle o' fire!)
Rock-a-by baby, hushed in the flame . . .

(An incident of the East St. Louis Race Riots, when some white women flung a living colored baby into the heart of a blazing fire.)
Reprinted from *The Ghetto and Other Poems,* 1918.

BORA RING

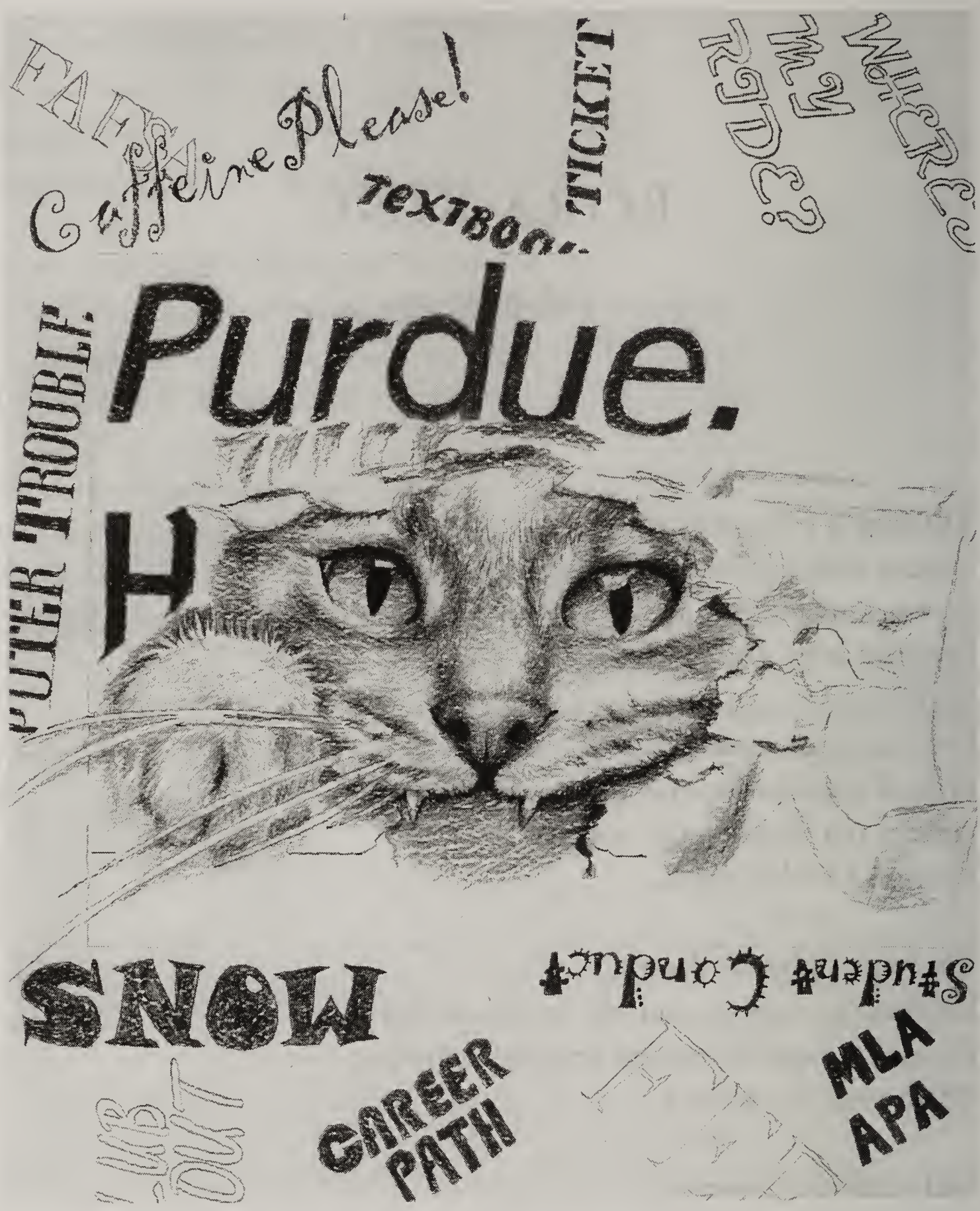
Judith Wright

The song is gone; the dance
is secret with the dancers in the earth,
the ritual useless, and the tribal story
lost in an alien tale.

Only the grass stands up
to mark the dancing-ring; the apple-gums
posture and mime past corroboree,
murmur a broken chant.

The hunter is gone; the spear
is splintered underground, the painted bodies
a dream the world breathed sleeping and forgot.
The nomad feet are still.

Only the rider's heart
halts at a sightless shadow, an unsaid word
that fastens in the blood of the ancient curse,
the fear as old as Cain.


Purdue.
Caffeine Please!
TEXTBOOK
TICKET
WHERE MY RIDE?
PUTER TROUBLE
FAFSA
SNOW
Student Conduct
CAREER PATH
MLA
APA

BIOGRAPHIES

Fabiana Araújo

Fabiana is enrolled full time at Purdue and considers herself a nontraditional student because she makes everything harder than it is supposed to be. Currently, her major is Psychology, but she has a strong interest in Art, Sociology, and Education. She is very curious and has an intense thirst for knowledge. She believes that social change begins with individuals, and her goal is to go back to Brazil and work with popular education again, helping people to identify their strengths and abilities to change their social conditions. Her dream is to have an orphanage. She would like to thank her teacher, Mr. Mellin, for not making English composition a struggling process, her daughter for inspiration, and her special friend Brandon Moseley for never letting her give up despite any difficulties.

Tim Bruce

It seems that starting college at the age of 39 is older than most students; however, the unique set of circumstances that got Tim to PNC has opened his eyes to what an education can do for one. Tim thanks all those PNC instructors who bother to show up and teach at Lakeside—especially three great English professors: Professor R. Mellin, Dr. L. Baird, and Dr. C. Williams.

Bradley Dimmit

Bradley was born in a rural farm community just outside of Monticello, Indiana. His parents, Cleo and Pat, are humble, church going people who brought

his brother and him up to believe in education and hard work. He was married in 1999 to Heather L. White. The couple has two children, Kerrigan and Annie, who are seven and twelve, respectively. He moved to Westville in 2004 to study Political Science and History at Purdue North Central, in the hopes of attending Law School at Vanderbilt University after graduation.

Fletch

Fletch loves the outdoors, and believes that if your daily obligations keep you from enjoying it, then the next best things are to pick up a good book and experience it through a compelling author, or get a sketch pad and pencils out for drawing. Go out and get some fresh air, but when stuck inside, take a break with something you enjoy creatively. Fletch does, and she wishes to thank Daryl, her hiking buddy, for the creative inspiration to be who she is.

Sylvia Fry

Sylvia has been attending Purdue North Central for four years. She is an English major and has a minor in legal studies. She is looking forward to graduating in May and moving to a warmer climate to take a break before going back to school in 2007.

Eugene Maines

Eugene is twenty-eight years old. He loves to read all kinds of fiction. His hobbies include doing crossword puzzles and writing short stories. This essay was one of the hardest essays for Eugene to write. He hopes to inspire other writers to look deep inside themselves and to let the creative juices flow. Eugene is grateful for having this great opportunity to be able to express himself in writing.

Rachel Maxin

Rachel is a sophomore pursuing a degree in Psychology. She hopes to become a psychologist and author in the future. Rachel is currently the secretary of the TRIO Club, a Meals on Wheels volunteer, and a PNC Writing Center tutor. She would like to thank her parents, Debbie and Joe, as well as her grandparents, Dan and Addy, for their unconditional support through all of her endeavors. She also expresses thanks to her best friends,

Jake and Stephanie, for always being there for her. Rachel is especially grateful to Professor Darlene Cohn for reviving her passion for writing.

Laura Erica Merkner

Laura enjoys many things in life, but writing is not one of them. Putting her thoughts down on paper is often considered to be an enjoyable experience, but reading the finished product is usually torturous. Laura has had many fine English teachers to guide her throughout the years, and it is because of them that she can write even at a decent level. Laura has many goals for the future (including her future place of employment), but until then, she will continue to live the college life.

Joe Neal

Joe Neal's after school babysitter was the public library on the walk home. The columns of books seemed to stretch forever, towering almost two Joe-lengths tall, and the musty scent of sleeping prose seemed to be on everything. He traveled time, chased rabbits, and hunted whales from his worn-thin-lime-green chair between the T's and U's. Joe plans to one day bequeath his gift to the shelf, where it will hope to be awakened by the small hands of curiosity.

Brenda Patterson

Brenda is a full-time mom, a full-time student, a full-time employee, and a volunteer coach. She is working towards degrees in English and Communication. She eventually plans to attend law school and focus on disability rights. In her free time she likes to embarrass her kids and give her friends a hard time. She would like to have an impact on others in her lifetime, but most people think she is too idealistic.

Benjamin L Starkey

Benjamin is a graduate of Purdue University North Central's school of English; he obtained his Bachelors degree in May of 2005. Benjamin's eventual goal is to earn a Doctorate in English and teach creative writing and composition at the university level. His interests include reading, writing, literary theory, contemporary fiction, photography, anarchy theory,

creative writing, poetry, and fine art. Benjamin lives in Valparaiso, Indiana with his fiancé, Heather, an art therapy major. He would like to extend his thanks to the English Department of PNC for helping him find his voice and for fostering his love for writing.

Joyce Taylor

Joyce Taylor has raised two children and one husband. She returned to school after a 27 year absence. Joyce has a site development company and thinks that it was totally fun designing the Portals web site! PNC is a great college and Joyce enjoys going here very much. Go Panthers!

Kriss Tumbleson

Who am I? –I am someone who thinks about being a poet more than I think about freedom. Which is bad because I am in prison, and have been for years. What's wrong with that statement? –I should be more worried about being out than anything else. But I believe everything (everything that you as a free person worry about) will take care of itself. If it doesn't, shit man, I guess it wasn't very important to begin with. All I can think of is Kerouac already drunk, swigging from a wine jug while on stage, October 7th, San Fran., whilst history is made by Ginsberg. Or Whitman selling *Leaves of Grass* door to door—maybe I'll get a chance.

Anthony J. Underwood

Anthony is a Senior at Purdue University North Central, and will graduate in December with a Bachelors Degree in the Liberal Studies program with my primary areas of study being Economics and Sociology. He plans to begin pursuing his PhD in Economics in the fall of 2007, with his areas of concentrations within the realm of Institutional Economics as gender, inequality, and globalization. He is also a member of the Association for Institutional Thought.

Polly Wainwright

Polly received her BLS from Purdue University North Central in 1996. She will receive her MS in Applied Mathematics and Computer Science from

Indiana University, South Bend in May 2006. She teaches math and statistics at PNC, and computer science at IUSB.

Julie Wallschlager

Julie was born in La Porte and graduated from La Porte High School in 1984. She is currently a junior at PNC, working on a BLS degree. The fascinating world of nature interests her while bird watching and walking the dunes. This sepia-toned photograph was taken in the Nevada desert on an unusually cold and windy day in November, and it symbolizes abandonment.

Danielle Weinhold

Danielle is a 23-year-old Behavioral Sciences major. Her work has previously appeared in *Mastodon Dentist, The Circle Magazine, Portals,* and the final issue of *Ink Pot.*

Belinda Wheeler

Belinda is an international student, from Australia. She will be graduating in May and intends working towards her MA in English this fall. Belinda would like to thank her friends and family for their support. She especially wants to take this opportunity to thank her mother, Deborah, for her love and patience while her only daughter is studying on the other side of the world. To Inu, Belinda thanks her for her loyalty and love and vows to keep the promise she made years ago.

Karen Zimmerman

Karen is working on prerequisite classes at Purdue North Central for a bachelor's degree in Radiation Therapy, which she will complete at Indiana University Northwest. Aside from attending PNC, she is the mother of Brandon (7½ years), Cheyenne (21 months), and wife of Michael. She gives them, along with her mom, Carolynne Jones, her heartfelt thanks for their love, support, and babysitting assistance. Without their help this would not be possible. She would also like to express her gratitude to Professor Mellin for his encouragement to enter her paper in the *Portals*' writing contest.

PNC WRITING AND ART CONTEST 2006-07

ESSAY CONTEST

The authors of first, second, and third place entries in categories one-six will receive $25, $15, and $10 financial aid awards respectively. The sole winner of category seven, the John J. Pappas Literary Essay Award, will receive a $75 financial aid award.

Authors are required to identify each essay submitted for the contest as belonging to one of the following categories, with no author submitting more than two entries per categories:

- **Category One: Personal Essay**
  An essay based on personal experiences and observations that does not require the use of secondary sources. Maximum length: 3,000 words.

- **Category Two: English Composition Research Essay**
  An essay written in English 101 or English 102 that uses at least three secondary sources. Maximum length: 1,500 words.

- **Category Three: Campus-Wide Research Essay**
  An essay written for any PNC course that uses at least five secondary sources. Maximum length: 3,500 words.

- **Category Four: Poetry**
  A poem of no more than 500 words.

- **Category Five: Short Fiction**
  A short story of no less than 1,000 words and no more than 3,000 words.

- **Category Six: Hypertext Essay, Poem, or Short Story**
  A personal, research, or creative work written for the web.

- **Category Seven: The John J. Pappas Literary Essay Award**
  A scholarly essay on a literary subject. Maximum length: 5,000 words.

ART CONTEST

Artists and photographers of the top two entries will receive $50 financial aid awards each. Artwork and photographs must be unframed and unmounted. Since the winning artwork will be published on the covers of English 101 and English 102 textbooks, judges will favor submissions of community or scholary interest. NB: If the original is a digital photograph, it must be 300 dpi or greater.

Writing Contest Website: http://www.pnc.edu/engl/writingcontest/

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ISBN 0-536-29746-0

9 780536 297464 90000